

TWENTY FOUR

S E R M O N S

Preached in the



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Preached in the

CATHEDRAL CHURCH

OF

ROCHESTER,

On SOLEMN OCCASIONS.

TWO VOLUMES.



L O N D O N

Printed by J. W. GALT, in St. Martin's Lane, and
by the Booksellers at Cambridge, for Thomas Agnew
& Sons, the Stationers, at the Strand, and
at the University of Oxford.

2 E R M O N S



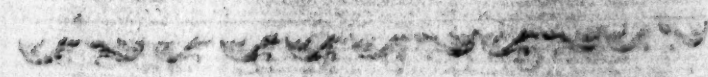
2 E R M O N S
T W E N T Y
F O U R

Founded in the

CATHEDRAL CHURCH

R O C H E S T E R

On SOLEMN OCCASIONS



TWENTY FOUR
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CATHEDRAL CHURCH



R O C H E S T E R,

On SOLEMN OCCASIONS.

B Y

The late Rev. JAMES HALES, A.M.
Vicar of CHART-SUTTON in KENT.

In TWO VOLUMES.

V O L U M E II.

L O N D O N :

Printed by J. and W. OLIVER, in *Bartholemew-Close*; and
Sold by Mr SMITH at *Canterbury*, Mr THOMAS FISHER
at *Rocheſter*, Mr WILLIAM MERCER at *Maidſtone*, and Mr
BAKER at *Tunbridge-Wells*, Bookſellers.

M DCC LXVI.

TWENTY FOUR

S E R M O N S

Preached in the

CATHEDRAL CHURCH



ROBERTS & CO.

On solemn occasions.

The late Rev. JAMES HALES, A.M.
Vicar of Church-Sutton, in Kent.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME II.

LONDON:

Printed by J. and W. Oliver, in the Strand; and
of Mr. Smith at Chancery Lane; Thomas, in St. Paul's Church-yard;
and of Mr. Williams, at the Bible and Bookshop, in Pall-mall.
At DEC LXXV.

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them that sit at meat with thee.*

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SERMON

S E R M O N XIII.

1 KINGS xvii. 18.

And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?

IT is the unhappiness of too many in the world who have experienced particular instances of a merciful Providence with a suitable behavior, that they are not as well prepared to meet with contrary events. How far this may be owing to a long and uninterrupted course of prosperity; or to a favorable prejudice with regard to their own persons, will be urged rather as a plea of aggravation than excuse. They either of

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them carry in them such a mixture of ignorance and ingratitude, as are by no means consistent with the condition of human nature. No one in this frail and uncertain state of things can expect to be totally exempted from some sort of suffering or affliction. And as a Series of temporal blessings is always thought a sufficient inducement to bespeak our utmost Gratitude, so a different Scene of circumstances, should so far engage our attention, as to consider it as a part of the portion which the great and wise Creator of the universe has thought fit to dispense to the children of men. Without this due regard to the revolutions of human affairs, and a proper confidence in the great Author of them, we shall not only defeat the gracious designs of Providence, but we shall prove the unhappy instruments of our own misery.

This must inevitably happen where we too closely attend to the sweets, without providing against the bitters of life. I mention this only with regard to the variableness of good or ill fortune, to the common run of what we call *prosperous* or *unfortunate* events. And for the truth of it, I may appeal to the
passage

passage of Scripture we have now before us. The person from whom the expostulation, or indeed reprimand (for it looks the most like it) arises; is by the divine direction favored with the entertainment of a prophet, at the time of a sore famine in the land. When he came to visit her, he found her in the utmost distress, and employed in "gathering a few sticks in order to dress the last meal for herself and son; that they might eat it and die." There is a circumstance indeed much in her favor; that when she acquainted the prophet with her scarcity, she does not, upon his request, refuse him a part of what, at that time especially, she could so very ill spare; though many prudential reasons might have been urged in her defence, if she had absolutely denied him. But God, who was the Prophet's Guide and Protector, and had before miraculously preserved him at the brook *Oberith*, so influenced the heart of this poor Widow, that upon the Prophet's request she hastened to relieve his hunger, without any previous regard to herself and child. The motive for this extraordinary piece of humanity was grounded upon her confidence

dence in the Prophet's promise; that her charity to him should be no diminution of her sustenance; that "the barrel of meal" and the cruse of oil should not waste, till "the time that the LORD should send rain upon the earth." This was accordingly verified; and she and he (the Prophet) and her son did eat many days. Now one would reasonably imagine, after so signal a miracle wrought in her favor, and the great honor done her by the residence and converse of the Prophet, that she might have been qualified to have born any affliction that might afterwards have befallen her, with due composure and resignation.

And therefore God, who had miraculously preserved her son from the danger of the famine, was willing to try whether she would continue the same confidence and affiance in him after he had taken away his life by sickness. But we find, that instead of commemorating the divine Goodness in her former escape; instead of gratefully acknowledging the present continuance of it, or well intreating the Prophet who was made the happy occasion of it; she very angrily ex-

postulates

postulates with him upon this accident, and does not scruple to charge him as the cause of it; though not without some imputation on her own past life. "What have I to do with Thee; O thou man of God! Art thou come to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?"

What I would infer from the conduct and behavior of this Widow, is, that we should by no means, be our circumstances ever so considerable or advantageous, think that we are beyond the reach of Providence; or that if God eminently interposeth in our rescue at one time, he may not as severely try us at another. That in the day of adversity to expostulate with the Almighty is highly criminal; or to impute the cause of our calamity to those who have been our best Friends and Benefactors, ungrateful. Nothing can be offered as a greater argument of our weakness and inadvertence. It bespeaks our presumption that we were created only to be provided for; and that God is under a necessity of interposing his good Providence in our behalf; whether we deserve it or not. That our infirmities are incurable, and that

we are all, indiscriminately, intitled to his care and protection. As these things sound too harsh to have any room in divinity, and are censures too severe to be levelled at Omniscience; I shall, in the sequel of this Discourse, make some Inquiry into the cause of the expostulation, "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God! Art thou come to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" and see whether any just reason can be assigned for it.

And here then let it be considered, that nothing is so apt to leave a deeper or more lasting Impression on the mind, than what we look upon to be supernatural or extraordinary; especially when we are under the strongest conviction that an event of this kind hath happened in our favor. As we cannot have too great a sense of so unexpected a gratification, so we cannot entertain too high a respect and veneration for the Author. This without doubt was the case of the Widow with regard to *Elijah*. It is scarce possible to describe all the horrors a person must have been under in her circumstances; to be reduced to the last meal

in

in a land of devouring famine; to have no other prospect of relief from any quarter; to be a melancholy witness to the daily and hourly departure of her friends and neighbors, and a sad spectator of the deplorable distress of the living; and all this heightened with the approaching period of her own and her son's life: I say, to consider a person in these circumstances, preserved from impending destruction, and sustained by a continued miracle till the expiration of the famine, which our blessed LORD informs us "held three years and six months," must be such an awakening to all the powers and faculties of the soul, as must necessarily extort from her the highest and most grateful acknowledgements. After such an extraordinary vouchsafement of Providence, it is natural enough to think that all fears of future dangers or calamities began to disperse; and that she could not help looking upon herself as the favorite and care of Heaven. For it is not very easy to behave as we ought under such circumstances. If there is no great fear of being wanting in gratitude, there is of being too much elated. This, of course, administers a great deal of self-conceit,

conceit, which is a child of Pride; and that prevents our behaving as we ought under disastrous events. We have no intimation in scripture, it is true, of this Widow's behavior after the reception of the Prophet to the time of the death of her son; so that we cannot absolutely assert this was what drew from Heaven this visitation on her, and occasioned those expostulatory expressions in the Text, "What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God?"

I have mentioned this only as a probable cause of this event. An abuse of providential blessings, especially such as these appear to be, must be highly provoking, and we cannot but know that they have been sooner or later severely punished. But,

Secondly, Another cause of the expressions I am now considering might be her wrong estimation of the authority of *Elijah*. When persons have once experienced the goodness of Providence in any miraculous interposition of danger, and fancy it is in their power, in extremities of the like nature, to have recourse to the same assistance, it is very natu-

ral for them to be easy and composed with
 regard to future apprehensions. The poor
 Widow, who had escaped the rage of fa-
 mine, and subsisted by a continued miracle,
 could not expect any violent disaster to hap-
 pen, so long as *Elijah*, her deliverer, was
 with her in the house. She could not, I
 say, but look upon herself and son as in a
 state of the highest safety, so long as the
 man of God was her guest and companion.
 Under these circumstances it could scarce be
 apprehended that any evil could come nigh
 her dwelling, much less that death would
 ever have adventured to make his ap-
 proaches, where a Prophet of the LORD, an
 Immortal dwelt. And therefore, when this
 unlooked-for event appeared, we may easily
 conjecture what terrible agonies it must oc-
 casion. The memory of her former deli-
 verance, we find, was buried in the loss of
 her son, and the person who was made the
 happy instrument of her preservation, is, in
 the violence of her outrage, charged as the
 Author of his death. "What have I to do
 " with thee, O thou man of God? Art thou
 " come unto me to call my sin to remem-
 " brance, and to slay my son?"

Now

Now though these are very inexcusable follies of passion, and carry strong marks of ingratitude; yet they seem to be grounded upon the supposed too-extensive power of the Prophet *Elijah*: by which she would ascribe to him a Prerogative which belongs to God only. And if this had been the case, she had good reason to apprehend that these rash expostulations might have incensed the Prophet to have inflicted on her the same punishment. He might with the same earnestness have prayed to God that he would avenge his cause, by the destruction of the Mother, as he did afterwards for the revival of the Child.

I have observed this, only to remind persons who have received extraordinary favors, of the great folly of their being hurried by their passions into indecent or opprobrious language to their Benefactors. And though no immediate vengeance followed upon this behavior of the Mother, yet she could not but stand self-condemned, when she was convinced of her mistake, by the goodness of the Prophet in supplicating God for the restoration of the life of her son.

But

But farther, That the Widow's misbehaviour to the Prophet might arise from an undue consideration of the nature of the miracle, and of the immediate Author of it, is farther apparent: For though *Elijah* had assured her it was the Lord's doing, and he was only made the instrument of communicating the news of this happy event to her, yet as she could not help ascribing more to him than she ought with respect to her own deliverance; so she could not but entertain a secret distrust of him, in the case of her son. A person who was commissioned to save life, might, it was natural enough for her to think, have power to destroy it. And though the Miracle by which they subsisted was wrought in their favor, yet so long as she considered the Prophet as the immediate cause of it, she could not but harbor bad thoughts of him with regard to the condition and circumstance of her child. She was unable to reconcile the Blessings with the Severities of Heaven, especially at a time when Providence was eminently engaged in her preservation, and she had the man of God to shield and protect her. These, without doubt, were circumstances that must administer

minister high confidence of security from future harm. And therefore, when so unexpected a misfortune happened, all that confidence which arose from the supposed security of her former condition, was changed into an ungenerous suspicion that He, who was the instrument of her escape from famine, was now become the author and cause of her misery. And though she had flattered herself too much on account of her former deliverance; yet she could not but look upon this infliction as a bad requital for his past entertainment. And indeed, the words which flow from her in so high an agony of spirit, seem very much to countenance it. "If I, thinks she, though a Gentile, am so highly esteemed by Heaven, as to have a favorite Prophet recommended to me for his sustenance and support in a time of famine, ought I, in the very act and exercise of such uncommon Beneficence, to suffer so sore an affliction as what must naturally arise from the loss of a favorite and only child?" Besides, another reason to support this opinion, is, that the Widow had no express command from God for his relief; this we may collect from the answer she

she makes to *Elijah* in the twelfth verse, "As
 " the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a
 " cake, but only a handful of meal in a bar-
 " rel, and a little oil in a cruse; and be-
 " hold, I am gathering a few sticks, for to go
 " in and dress it for me and my son, that we
 " may eat it and die." And therefore to dis-
 pose of part of her sustenance to a person,
 who was not only a stranger, but of a dif-
 ferent religion, and this too at a time of ex-
 treme want and scarcity, might naturally
 enough excite the Widow to expostulate
 with the Prophet upon so ill a return of her
 former hospitality. And accordingly we find
 it left such an impression on the mind
 of *Elijah*, that he seems at a loss to reconcile
 these extremely different dispensations: That
 God should so eminently interpose his good
 Providence in their deliverance from the fa-
 mine, and presently after take away that life
 which had been preserved by a Miracle; and
 this too at a time when he for whose sake
 the Miracle was solely or principally wrought,
 continued as a guest and companion in the
 house. And therefore, in his address to God
 upon this accident, he not only discovers a
 great deal of surprise; but seems to expostu-
 late

late with the great Creator concerning the justice of it. "O my God, says he, hast thou brought evil upon the Widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? As if he had said, "Is this a proper return for her Goodness and Humanity to me at a time when I was ready to perish with hunger? Is this a just requital for her care of and attendance upon me ever since? What an occasion of Blasphemy will this administer to the enemies of the Lord? What contempt will it bring upon thy Messengers the Prophets? Who will venture to relieve or protect them in times of danger or difficulty, when they are to be thus repaid?" These are suggestions that naturally arise from the Prophet's complaint. And though the Widow might set too high a price upon her former entertainment of the Prophet; yet we find *Elijah*, in the height of his zeal, intreating God to dry up her tears by the revival of her son. But Farther, There may be another reason assigned for the Widow's unkind representations; namely, that she was under an incapacity of bearing this misfortune as she ought for

for want of better information. As she was by birth and education a Gentile, she might not have sufficient light to direct her concerning her obligation to a moral behavior. She might not apprehend that it could be any error in conduct, to complain with that asperity of temper to a person, who, in her opinion, had given but too great occasion for it. And though she could not but stand in high admiration at the deliverance wrought for her, yet *this*, instead of being an argument of her acquiescence in what had happened to her Son, served only as a motive to excite her resentment. But this is such a depravity as can by no means be consistent with a state of Nature: For an inspired Writer assures us, that if the Gentiles have no particular revealed Law whereby to govern and direct their actions, yet they have a general one implanted in them, to which they are *obliged* to conform. And that is wrote in such strong characters, that a man must do violence to himself to deface them. Otherwise it would not be consistent with the divine Goodness, to deprive men of Happiness on account of offences, if such *can* be offences which it is impossible for them to avoid.

avoid. But this, I think, could not be the case of the Widow in the text. If she could bring herself to conform to one of the principal and fundamental Laws of Nature, and extend her Charity to the Prophet at a time when she was reduced to the utmost scarcity, there can be no just reason offered, when she found the unexpected good effects of it, why she should not continue her gratitude, whatever future misfortune befel her; much less that she should shew her *distrust*, or impute the cause of it to her former Deliverer.

Upon the whole then, be the cause of these expostulatory expressions in the Text what it will, when we consider the tenor of them, and to whom they were directed, they can by no means admit of any justification. When we have received such an earnest of divine affection as a miraculous interposition in our favor, in a time of the most imminent danger, and when this extraordinary vouchsafement is extended to the preservation of not only ourselves, but those who were dearest to us; no ordinary occurrences in future life should ever suffer us to depreciate or efface the memory of such valuable blessings.

blessings. — Things that are supernatural ought never to be ranked with the common accidents of life. The sorrow that is occasioned by *worldly losses* and *misfortunes* should never overbalance the joy which naturally arises from the reflection of a past kind and merciful Providence.

And perhaps if the poor Widow in the Text, whom I have occasion so often to mention, had only attended to her late wonderful escape from the famine, and considered the Prophet as she ought to have done in the light of her great Deliverer, the death of her Son might not have transported her into such indecent and extravagant expressions.

And therefore this event, though considered with all the affecting circumstances it is capable of, will be little or no extenuation of her fault. Admit she was the fondest and most affectionate Parent, so that "her life was bound up in that of her Son;" and he the most dutiful, obliging and only Child; still the loss of him by natural death will by no means justify her behavior after

it. Besides, she might have had recourse at this time to many comfortable reflections, which must have served to mitigate the concern she was under upon this account. If to this good end, the wholsom advice of the Prophet had failed, there was still before her a supernatural instance of Providence in her preservation. The *barrel of meal* and the *cruse of oil* could not but put her in mind of her late wonderful escape, and engage her more than ordinary thanks to Heaven for it.

Besides, she might have considered that what had happened to her Son was but the common lot of nature; that in an infliction of this kind God had many gracious ends in view; — that had he lived longer he might not have been so fit for Heaven; — that he might have "forgot his Creator in the days " of his youth," proved a shame and grief to her that bare him, and brought her by a long series of undutifulness " with sorrow " to her grave." Such reflections, as they never fail to administer comfort, so they always instruct people how to behave in the day of adversity. And I believe, I may ven-

ture to pronounce, that to the want of them, not only the indecent behavior of the Widow in the Text, but likewise a great part of that ingratitude we meet with here below, are principally owing.

I shall conclude with this observation; how absolutely necessary it is for every one of us to endeavor after a religious confidence, a holy trust in God, in order to be easy under all events; and to be content with those things which we have; to be satisfied with a little, and to make a right use of abundance; to be patient in affliction, modest and humble in prosperity, and perfectly resigned to all the ways of Providence.

If we take care to do our duty in every instance as we ought, and improve this our only time of Probation to the best advantage, we shall not only experience the blessed effects of it in this life, but we shall receive ample amends for all our labor from the hands of God in the great day of retribution; when our Faith and our other Virtues shall be published in the sight of Men and Angels; and we ourselves applauded for having

" fought a good fight, finished our course,
 " and kept the faith." To this desirable and
 good end, let us, in the words of our most
 excellent Church, beseech " Almighty God,
 " who knoweth us to be set in the midst of
 " so many and great dangers, that by reason
 " of the frailty of our Nature we cannot al-
 " ways stand upright; that he would mer-
 " cifully grant us such a portion of his
 " grace, as may support us in all dangers,
 " and carry us through all temptations,
 " through JESUS CHRIST our LORD." To
 whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost,
 be ascribed all Honour and Glory, Might,
 Majesty and Dominion, from henceforth
 and for evermore. *Amen.*





S E R M O N XIV.

J O B vi. 8, 9, 10.

O that I might have my request! And that GOD would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please GOD to destroy me; that he would let loose his band, and cut me off: Then should I yet have comfort.

THIS Book affords us a lively representation of a righteous person struggling under the greatest calamities incident to life.

And as nothing is capable of making deeper impressions on virtuous minds than virtuous and noble Ideas, so justly to describe the demeanor of this great good man under the various circumstances and relations of life, cannot fail to excite in us a secret admiration

of his virtues, and a laudable desire (should the same misfortunes attend us) of behaving as he did.

It is true indeed his conduct in some parts, and at certain seasons, was not truly commendable; he did not always retain that evenness of soul which alone could support him in all his agonies. The hurry of thought, the variety of reflection which occurred to him under these unhappy circumstances, quite distracted his composure, and in a great measure dispossessed him of his patience. The review of his past life, (to which he had frequent recourse) and the strict inquiries he made into his former conduct, in order to detect the cause of his affliction, and to ask forgiveness of God, very much added to his perplexity. No wonder therefore, if when upon such a survey he was not able to impeach any one action which might merit the displeasure of God; if he was never conscious of the least deviation from his laws; when in his prosperity he "was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame; a father to the fatherless, and a husband to the widow;" if when his life had been one constant

constant and uninterrupted course of holiness; no wonder, I say, if upon such reflections he was sometimes bereaved of his Reason, and had those intervals of impatience. The heavy hand of God, the weight of his punishment, and the exquisite pain resulting from it, together with the small prospect of its discontinuance, bore so hard upon him, that (not to tax Providence with injustice) he earnestly solicits that God would at least be so favorable as to shorten his Affliction by Death; being very well assured, from the impulse of his Conscience, and the sense of his own uprightness, that all his Affliction would terminate in the Grave, and that then his heaviness would be turned into joy: "O that I might have my request! says he; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me, to let loose his hand and cut me off: Then should I yet have comfort."

From which words, I shall, in the

First place, assign some probable reasons whence this request might proceed; and,

C 4

Secondly,

Secondly, I shall endeavor to extenuate the fault of it from the condition of human Nature in general, and the circumstance of holy *Job* in particular.

But first of all it may be necessary to take some notice of the words themselves: This indeed may seem altogether needless, the substance of them being an ardent and importunate address to God for Death, from one who was oppressed with the most exquisite torment both of Mind and Body, more than the spirit of man could sustain. But because of that variety of expression Translators have made use of to represent this particular request, I thought it in some measure necessary to inquire into them severally, in order to inform myself which was the truest, and had the nearest correspondence with the *Septuagint* Version.

In the old *English* Translation we find it thus described: " O that I might have my
 " desire, and that God would grant me the
 " thing that I long for! O that God would
 " begin, and smite me! that he would let his
 " hand go, and take me clean away! Then
 " should I have some comfort." This Trans-

lation

lation, though it is not rendered verbally from the *Septuagint* Version, bears a nearer resemblance to it than the other, and explains the sense of it in clearer and more express terms. The other I have already mentioned for the subject of this Discourse; and we may observe in the second verse a wide difference from that of the latter *Ἀλλήλῃς δὲ κύριος τρυφάτω με*: "O that God would begin and smite me," being entirely omitted. It is true, the omission is not very material, since, if observed, it would only be introductory to explain the drift and design of this petition. But though this deficiency is observed in the one and not in the other, yet had the omission been general, it might perhaps have been a mean of extenuating the sin, and rendering the person from whom this petition proceeded less culpable. For a sinful act or expression, when proceeding from mature and deliberate Reason (as this appears to have done from the preface that attends it) must certainly be allowed to be more aggravated than words which flow from a mind inadvertent, or an action committed upon rash and precipitate reason. But in which of these two senses we apprehend this request, we cannot, whatever we extenuate, wholly excuse

excuse the sin of it: for in either we may observe such a scope of contemplation (as appears by that train and variety of expression made use of in this particular address) as not only plainly discovers the sin of them, but evidently points out the principal motives that prompted him to intreat God to cut him off. After this short Dissertation upon the words, I shall now proceed to assign some probable reasons whence they might proceed.

The first, and certainly the most obvious one that drew these expressions from holy *Job*, was the miserable condition he was then in. The Devil would never have been able to have brought him to a confession that he was weary of living, had not the Almighty dispensed so large a scope of temptation. The infirmities of his nature had never contracted so much guilt as to prescribe to his Maker, had not the Devil been permitted to seduce him by such a variety of afflictions. And no wonder if flesh and blood, when oppressed with such exquisite pain, such a series of torments as *Job* underwent, was at last induced to quit Reason and

and Patience, the two principal guides of his past life; and by an importunate request to the Author of his misfortunes (a request indeed not becoming a creature as he was) to cut him off. This therefore may be alledged as one of those reasons that induced Job to express his uneasiness at the dispensations of Providence, and withal to intreat God, with so much earnestness and impatience, that he would let loose his hand, and destroy him.

Another reason that might induce him thus ardently to wish for a dissolution, might be a prospect of a blessed Immortality after Death. His misery might first awaken in him a desire of relief from his troubles; but the Joys he conceived would be allotted him after he should be delivered from this burden of the flesh, might so transport him, that he might not possibly, at that juncture of time, be so advertised and circumspect in his address as he ought to have been. And this seems not to be a little countenanced from the words themselves, where we find that he grounds the whole of his Petition upon this view, that after Death he should not only have a general release from his troubles,

bles, but should once more be comforted. And this may be made farther evident, if we look forward to the twentieth chapter of this Book, where *Job*, from an assurance of a future Reward, seems to have lost all sense of outward afflictions, and to be under, if I may so call it, a kind of spiritual extasy and transport. That heavy pressure of misfortunes which some time before had staggered his understanding, and almost tempted him to disbelieve a Providence, had since improved itself into such a confidence of a future retribution, that all his complaints were silenced, and his present anguish swallowed up in the ravishing contemplation of future Bliss, in visions of Glory hereafter. " For I " know, says he, that my Redeemer liveth; " and that he shall stand at the latter day " upon the earth; and though after my skin " worms destroy this Body, yet in my flesh " shall I see God; whom I shall see for my " self, and mine eyes shall behold, and not " another." This therefore might be another motive to which this request of holy *Job* may most probably be imputed.

Another reason, and one that might influence

fluence him as strongly as any of the rest to make this request, might be an apprehension of being at last tempted to fall from his Integrity, and through Impatience of his long-continued Affliction, to distrust God in his several dispensations. And this is not at all unlikely, if we consider with what great Integrity *Job* had always behaved himself; if we consider his zeal to his God, the perfect love and reverence he bore him; how strict and impartial in his distribution of Justice to his fellow-creatures; how careful and tender a father to his children; how merciful and compassionate to the poor and miserable. If we consider him, I say, in all these several relations, it may not be improbable to think, that rather than offend Him whom he all his life-time had so carefully honoured and obeyed; rather than stain his character, and sully the scene of his past actions, he might be induced to solicit God to take him to himself; or, in the words of the Text, "to cut him off."

And this supposition may receive yet farther confirmation, if we consider not only the Affliction and Terrors of the Almighty,
(which

(which, as I have before observed, might have been a sufficient reason or occasion for these expressions in the Text) but the many Taunts and Provocations of a peevish and intensed Wife; the false reasonings and groundless surmises of those from whom one in his condition might expect better treatment; and who, before his circumstances were thus reversed, made an outward shew of Love and Kindness; I say, all this considered, it cannot be at all unreasonable or absurd to think that *Job*, when thus surrounded, when no prospect of comfort, no consolatory advice or friendly sympathy appeared, should betake himself thus to his God, and through fear of being tempted to forego his Integrity, should choose rather, and earnestly intreat to be utterly cut off, and become entirely extinct.

No man, when the scene of his misfortunes began to open, could bear them with less disorder, or approve himself with so much seeming composure and serenity. And probably this behavior had continued, and shewed itself without the least interruption or impatience, had his friends endeavored

to

to heal, and not to aggravate his misery. Had they, instead of inveighing against their afflicted friend, spent their time in supplicating God, and intreating a release from his troubles, they might not only have been instruments of preserving him blameless while under them, but of shortening and discontinuing them so much the sooner. But when, instead of making use of this method, they continually upbraided him, unjustly condemning him as a Hypocrite, and as a necessary consequence of which the heavy hand of God was now upon him; no wonder that *Job*, thus destitute of comfort, or even of common pity, makes his humble appeal to God on his own behalf; and, in that affectionate address to the Author of his misfortunes, begs him to hasten his dissolution, lest ere that time come, he might be induced, either through the mistaken objections of his friends, or some melancholy Thoughts of his own, to distrust God in his several dispensations towards him.

The prosperity of the Wicked, and the miserable condition of righteous *Job*, might have induced many an upright and pious man

man (especially in those darker ages of the world) to tax Providence with partiality, or mal-administration; to have lanced farther out in the bitterness of his soul, and to have fallen from his Integrity, and perhaps with his own hands to have put in execution what he so earnestly requested might be administered to him by the Almighty. How many instances of the like nature, under less severe trials, the present age has furnished us with, is too melancholy a reflection to pursue in this place. But these were extremes *Job* never could be tempted to fall into, nor even to recede from that mediocrity of temper which so conspicuously approved itself under the pressure of his misfortunes. Sometimes indeed the weight of his calamities added to his uneasiness, but still it seemed rather to forewarn than hasten to extremes.

However, his apprehension of being in length of time wrought into a compliance, and made to submit by a long continued train of miseries, might be an occasion to wish for his dissolution, or, in the words of the Text, "to be cut off." These seem to be some of the principal reasons which induced

Job

Job to make this request to his God.

I shall now proceed, in the

Second place, To endeavor to extenuate the fault of thus reasoning, from the condition of human Nature in general, and the circumstance of holy *Job* in particular.

The infirmity of man is in nothing more apparent than in that inconstancy of temper, which generally attends him throughout all the different stages of his life. He is no sooner emerged from a state of childhood, and his understanding begins to dawn upon him, but this infirmity discovers itself in all his actions. And as his faculties come to be improved by experience and observation, so they are continually exerting themselves upon new schemes and untried vanities. An active, and I wish I could say an unerring principle, stimulates him on in pursuit of Happiness. His Imagination is inflamed with conceptions of his own forming, and methods are devised how to put them in execution. The sum of his present expecta-

tion is no sooner attained, but he finds himself mistaken in his aim, and sickens in the fruition. And therefore what was defective in the first scheme must now be repaired by maturer deliberation. Thus he goes on to busy and employ his faculties without ever being able to discover the engine which sets them to work, his own Levity, and Inconstancy. He becomes at last impatient in the pursuit, and, because his success is not answerable to his desires, accuses the Almighty for having implanted such ardent longings in the soul, and at the same time for not furnishing them with suitable objects of satisfaction. How extremely blameable such a conduct is, and where it must at last terminate, is too evident to need a proof.

But though it is not every man's unhappiness to repose such a confidence in himself, and rail at the dispensations of Providence, because not answerable to the measure of his desires; yet the private murmurings and discontents of many, arising from a penurious and indigent condition; and the arrogance and ingratitude of others, which flow from a state of Affluence and Plenty, are as
severe

severe reproaches on human nature, as they are affronts to Him by whose Providence they are permitted, and to whose goodness they are indebted for all the comforts and conveniences of life. The reason generally given for these different turns of temper is this, that the mind of man, how free and independent soever it ought to be of all external things, is generally upon a level with his condition. His thoughts frequently rise and fall with the grandeur or meanness of his circumstances: and as the day-spring of Prosperity is apt to dazzle his eyes, and make him forget his duty, so a change of fortune sinks and dis-spirits him, makes him peevish and discontented. And indeed we see this too frequently verified in altercations of this nature. And therefore to leave the common road of the world, and to fix upon a quite different standard for our behavior under the above-mentioned states of life, to set God always before us, and to make him our principal and ultimate regard under all the changes and chances of life, as it is one of the surest arguments of a regular, even, and confirmed mind, so it is likewise one of

the greatest instances of an uncommon Virtue.

That this had been the case of this holy person in the Text, we have not only his own testimony under his misfortunes to evince, but the evidence of God ere he permitted them to fall upon him. He was distinguished in the judgement of the Almighty from the rest of mankind for his exemplary life and conduct, and for his superior and more eminent works of Piety and Justice ; " So that there was none like him in " all the earth, a perfect and an upright " man, one that feared God and eschewed " evil." His own reflections likewise on his former Prosperity afford us the most convincing proofs how well he deserved this character, and with what integrity he discharged himself in all his public and private offices. Look upon him as a Father, you will find him expressing the utmost tenderness of a parent, in doing sacrifice to, and supplicating God for the sins of his children. Take him from his family, you will see the greatest respect and reverence paid him by persons of all distinctions : " When he went

" out to the gate through the city, the
" young men hid themselves, and the aged
" arose and stood up. The Princes refrained
" talking, and laid their hand upon their
" mouth. The Nobles held their peace, and
" their tongue clave to the roof of their
" mouth. When the ear heard him, it bless-
" ed him, and when the eye saw him, it
" gave witness to him." And then comes the
reason of all this Respect and Veneration.
" Because he delivered the poor that cried,
" and the fatherless, and him that had none to
" help him. He brake the jaws also of the
" wicked, and plucked the spoil out of their
" teeth." Could it be apprehended that God
should select such a person (the nearest sem-
blance of himself on earth) as a proper ob-
ject of his Vengeance, and try him with such
severe and continued Afflictions? Could any
but a *Job* not have been staggered with the
surprise, and sunk under the weight of his
misfortunes? Could any but a perfect and
upright man upon the so sudden loss of
his children and substance, in that seemingly
perfect calm and tranquillity of mind, have
prostrated himself to the author of his cala-
mities, have worshipped him, and said,

" Naked came I out of my mother's womb,
" and naked shall I return thither; the LORD
" gave, and the LORD hath taken away;
" blessed be the name of the LORD." Such a
behavior, such a resignation under these cir-
cumstances, one would think, should have
averted any farther severities or trials of Pro-
vidence. But though God was convinced
of his Integrity, yet the Devil (who had too
much reason to believe it from the ill success
of his last stratagem) could not help throw-
ing in fresh suspicions, and proposing other
methods of trial. And we find it was agree-
able to infinite Wisdom to allow that enemy
of mankind a still farther proof of *Job's* In-
tegrity, in order, probably, to convince suc-
ceeding generations that a consciousness of
a man's own uprightness, and the expecta-
tion of a future reward, are sufficient to
support him under the greatest conflicts, and
will prove an over-match to the utmost ma-
lice of men, and the craft and subtilty of the
Devil himself. Accordingly therefore this
grand Apostate receives a second commission,
agreeable to his desire, and is impowered to
afflict him in his person; and to take his
own method of putting it in execution:
which

which we may be sure was none of the tenderest or most agreeable to human nature. A person of *Job's* character could never expect favor from one whom he had so often foiled in his designs, and baffled all his temptations. And therefore the Devil seems to have deliberated with himself as to the method he should follow, and to have exerted his utmost malice in the application of it. "From the sole of his feet to the crown of his head," he is to undergo the most cutting pains and the extremest misery. His body, which before had been the seat of a peaceful and upright soul, is now made an instrument of vengeance and diabolical malice. He has nothing left him to guard against impatience, but a mind tortured with pain, and depressed with misfortunes. And can it be supposed the spirit of a man is able to sustain itself under these infirmities? Can it ever be thought that a strict decency of behavior could be observed under such distracted and agonizing circumstances? Can it be a crime for this holy person to solicit Death, probably to avoid the much greater evil of despair, thro' impatience?

We are informed in Scripture that *Elijah*, one of the greatest Saints on earth, who had no reason to express his uneasiness at the dispensations of Providence, as having been wonderfully sustained and preserved by it, could not avoid shewing his impatience, and requesting God that *that* life which was the immediate care of Heaven, and which was to be a pattern and example to succeeding ages, might be taken away from him; thereby intimating his great distrust of the Divine Protection, and his weariness of being in such a state to which was annexed so many severe trials and temptations. Thus likewise we are informed that the inspired Author of the seventy seventh Psalm runs into the like complaint and diffidence of Providence, upon account of some bodily pain and affliction, and because his soul refused to be comforted: "Will the LORD absent
" himself for ever? and will he be no more
" intreated? Is his mercy clean gone for
" ever? and is his promise come utterly to an
" end for evermore? Hath God forgotten
" to be gracious? and will he shut up his
" loving-kindness in displeasure?" If therefore, the Prophet *Elijah*, one who had God's
loving-

loving-kindness vouchsafed him, and who had in sundry instances so signally experienced it: If such a one could expostulate with his best Friend and Benefactor with so much diffidence and impatience upon his being pursued, and distressed in the execution of his duty; how should this holy person, who had received no such particular assurances, whose conscience was free from any known sin, upon that shock of outward misfortunes, and the exquisite pain he was under in his own person, help discovering certain uneasinesses under such severe strokes of Providence? How could flesh and blood, laboring under such a pressure of evils, entertain any true regard for life, or rather not ardently wish for death? How could a person under so uncommon a visitation forbear thinking either that his behavior must have been founded upon wrong principles, or that God had transgressed the bounds of Justice? In short, if we consider his unparalleled life; with his unprecedented sufferings, man cannot but admire the one, and God forgive the other. For so long as we acquit ourselves as we ought in the greater and more important Duties, such as
Justice

Justice and Mercy, we are assured we shall be excused as to many other imperfections which flesh and blood are naturally heir to.

I do not mention this to encourage those persons, (whose conduct has been agreeable to the main rules of their duty) to abate their care in the performance of duties of an inferior nature, or to take off from the concern they are, or ought to be under, for the omission of them: but I only say, that in cases of an extraordinary nature (such as that of the person's in the Text) "God will
 " not be extreme to mark what is done
 " amiss. For he knoweth whereof we are
 " made, he remembereth that we are but
 " dust," that our rational powers are apt to be disturbed by the impressions of sense,
 " that our corruptible body presseth down
 " the soul, and our earthly tabernacle weigh-
 " eth down the mind that misseth upon
 " many things."

But then this is no justification of those who either wilfully transgress in points of Duty that are of an inferior moment, or

grow

grow slack and remiss in the observation of them, in hopes that their other Virtues will cast a veil over them, or that they will be reckoned amongst the pardonable infirmities of human nature. Let them not thus deceive themselves. The sins of Sloth and Presumption do not proceed from the corrupt humors of the flesh, but from a vicious temper and habit of the soul; and where they once happen, and are encouraged, there it must be impossible for Piety and Virtue, or any thing that is praise-worthy, long to subsist. An indulgence of this nature will at last subvert the very foundation on which these are raised, and introduce another set of principles, the event of which will be a constant course of sin, and a continual remorse and horror of Conscience.

The way therefore to be safe from these dangerous and destructive errors, is to avoid all liberties of this nature, which we may be encouraged to take, either from the imagined security of our condition, or from the consideration of our nature. We know, when we have done all that is commanded, we shall be but unprofitable servants. We are
sensible

sensible, that there are many infirmities attending us in our constitution; some which tempt us from our Duty, and others which render it difficult and uneasy, which will employ our utmost care and vigilance to guard against and overcome. So that we have not the least room to think we may give a loose to our behavior in the commission of sin, or in the omission of our Duty.

And therefore, to habituate ourselves to this Discipline, to reduce our affections, passions, and interests to this standard, as it is an argument of a lively faith, and sincere endeavor in the execution of our Duty; so it will likewise instruct us how to behave under the rod of God, and the many instances we must meet with of Disappointment, Malice, and Infidelity in the world. Our Faith will discover to us a permitting Providence in all those evils which the craft or subtilty of the devil or man worketh against us; and it will make us ample amends in the representation of those joys that are promised to the faithful. We shall be able to descry, with Job, the finger of God in his severest Dispensations; to make him our support

support and stay under all our calamities.
 Thus we shall make our journey through
 this vale of misery as agreeable as may be;
 and though it be our fortune to go on our
 way weeping, yet if we bear forth good seed
 we shall doubtless "come again with joy,
 " and bring our sheaves with us."



SERMON

SERMON XV.

PSALM xxxviii. 18.

*For I will confess my wickedness, and
be sorry for my sin.*

THE doctrine of Repentance is
of so great importance that it
cannot be too often or too se-
riously inculcated. Indeed the
wisdom of our Church hath set apart a con-
siderable season for the due observance of
this Duty. But the daily Errors and Vices
of men, make it necessary to apply daily Ad-
monitions, in order to stop the progress of
sin, as well as to enforce Repentance and a
new life. Besides, an attempt of this kind
can never be thought unreasonable; for as
there are numberless instances of unrelenting
sinners, who walk on still in darkness, not-
withstanding the most persuasive motives to
the

the contrary; so there may be others who have commenced Penitents, who may stand in need of *some* instruction how to proceed, and to fulfil that work which the grace of God hath so happily begun in them. To such, (if there be any such in this Assembly) I would apply myself; and beg their attention during the short time I shall take up in the consideration of the words before us; "I will confess my wickedness, and be sorry " for my sin."

The import of the words before us consists,

First, In understanding the nature and extent of Confession; how far it may, or may not, be available to procure pardon for sin. And,

Secondly, The Sorrow and Remorse which must necessarily attend us under this circumstance, to render our humiliation the more effectual.

But because a sorrow for and a due sense of our sins, is necessarily previous to our Confession,

feſſion, I ſhall for method ſake obſerve, in the firſt place, what ſort of Sorrow and Humiliation that is, which is neceſſarily required in order to our forgiveness.

St Paul has told us that it is a " ſorrow " which worketh Repentance not to be repented of." Such a thorough change of Temper and Affections, as to make us lothe now, what we were pleaſed and delighted with before. And the Pſalm from whence the Text is taken, is ſo full of lively expreſſions of this particular Grief and Reſentment, that no one can be at a loſs to conceive what ſort of contrition that is, which we muſt expreſs, before we can commence true Penitents.

Indeed there are ſome who, perhaps, cannot produce all thoſe external ſigns of Sorrow, which others have done, and ſo may apprehend that their Repentance is not ſufficiently true and ſincere. And becauſe, literally ſpeaking, they have not ſowed in tears, they are apt to conclude they ſhall not reap in joy. Indeed we have been aſſured by one of the moſt exemplary Inſtan-

ces of Repentance that "tears had been his meat day and night," that he had often "roared for the very disquietness of his heart." But we are to consider, that the temper of all men is not the same; neither are these outward and sensible expressions of grief absolutely requisite towards a sincere Repentance. A man may reflect upon his past offences, with dry eyes, and at the same time have a broken and contrite heart. And it is as certain, on the other hand, that others may shew a great deal of outward concern, and shed abundance of tears for the crimes of their past life, and yet all this sorrow shall not be attended with any compunction, with any remorse or horror of conscience. That which distinguishes the true Penitent from the insincere one, is the trouble and disquiet which he suffers within, and which God only and his own soul are privy to. As to those superficial uneasinesses which are in the power of every Hypocrite to display, they are not to be looked upon as real proofs of Repentance; for it is possible we may fast, and at the same time the body may remain unmortified; we may pray to God, and still continue as indevo-

as before. In a word, all our outward deportment may be exactly suited to the condition of a true Penitent, and yet "our inward parts may be very wickedness."

The sincere Penitent, in the mean time, is he who impartially considers all his sins; who harbors no favorite lust or passion, nor any thought that is inconsistent with the laws of God; who is diligent and active to subdue those vices which are rooted in his nature, and suffers not his temporal to triumph over his spiritual expectations. Such a man, in a religious sense, may be truly said to forsake his sins, and to keep God's commandments; and his more eminent works of Piety and Mercy will cast a veil over those other frailties, which flesh and must naturally be heirs to.

Thus having observed what sort of Sorrow and Humiliation that is which is requisite to a sincere Repentance; I shall, in the

Second place, Endeavor to shew the nature and extent of Confession, how far it may or may not be available to procure a

pardon for past sins. And because I have observed to you, under the former head, that the sorrow which a sinner expresses for his guilt, doth not wholly consist in outward expressions, I shall consider this as it includes in it the due performance of some outward acts, and without which we cannot obtain Pardon and Forgiveness.

It were needless to take up any of your time in demonstrating the necessity of this Duty, since we are in so many places of Scripture informed that it is made an absolute and indispensable condition of our Salvation, and what the most ignorant amongst us cannot but be acquainted with. I shall only observe, for brevity's sake, to whom this confession is to be made, and what temper of mind is requisite to render it effectual. Now as the whole of our Duty is comprised under these two particulars, the love of God, and the love of our Neighbour, so the defect or breach of it must have the same relation and tendency. Indeed, in strict propriety, all our offences may be said to terminate in one of these points, and to be crimes against God, though they more immediately

mediately affect our Neighbour. And because the proper discharge of this Duty is of such importance, that no less than our everlasting Happiness depends upon it, I shall endeavor to illustrate it in the best manner I am able, that so we may not impose upon ourselves by vainly imagining we perform it, when indeed we do not.

Let us suppose that some among us have in the intercourse of life been guilty of Fraud or any other Injustice, and have succeeded so well as not to be discovered; yet upon an apprehension of future detection, or the dread of our sins accompanying us in another world unrepented and unatoned for, we are seriously inclined to do our utmost to make all possible satisfaction. How must we act? What is the first step to be taken? and how are we to proceed to a final accomplishment? To which I answer, that we are in the first place obliged, in order to testify our sense of the injury, to take the speediest and most effectual methods of making satisfaction to the suffering party. And though there is not, perhaps cannot be any fixed or determinate Law to ascertain

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penalties

penalties to offences of this nature, yet we are to be careful that our Restitution is not defective; and that we do not think ourselves too generous in our returns. He that restores only in kind, gives back by compunction what he received with injustice. We are to take into consideration every circumstance, that with any degree of probability may be supposed to aggravate our crime, and so make our Restitution the heavier. The Law of *Moses*, in cases of this nature, enjoins, where the Party was able to answer it, at least a *fourfold* Restitution; and for every other manner of trespass, upon a legal conviction, *double* the value. In a word, we must submit it impartially to our own consciences, and do in this case to others what in the like circumstance we would they should do to us. This is the properest method we can take to wipe away the guilt of these offences, and to qualify us for the favor of Heaven. But we are not to acquiesce in the performance of this particular, we must proceed after satisfaction made to our Neighbour, to confess the crime, and ask forgiveness from God. As he is our Lawgiver, we are accountable to him for

ON PSALM XXXVIII. 18. 53

for the breach of every private Duty, and an injury to our Neighbour demands double atonement and expiation.

GOD will never accept of a bare restitution for a fraud, without a proper Repentance and Acknowledgement of the crime. We must not think we have expiated our guilt, when we have only restored the unjust gain, without humbling ourselves before *him* in whose sight we have committed the offence, and whose laws we have violated thereby. For this may often happen, and yet there may be no real sorrow in the offender. A man may be induced to express a seeming resentment for an injury, in order to palliate or extenuate his guilt. A speedy method of satisfaction is too apt to beget a favorable opinion that the injury was not intended; and a man's outward concern is often misinterpreted for real Innocence. But however He may appear by this artful gloss in the sight of men, however he may impose on the charitable credulity of his Brethren, yet God is not mocked; He is a witness of our most secret thoughts, and sees upon what motives and principles our Restitution

Restitution is grounded. And therefore when we are obliged to submit to an act of this nature when detected, or even without compulsion induced to it; whether we are wrought upon by the remorse of conscience, or the apprehension of a Discovery, and the subsequent shame of it; we must not only be careful to testify our resentment by an ample satisfaction, and to ask Pardon of the injured party, but we must implore Forgiveness of an incensed God, in a manner suitable to the hainousness of our transgression, and to take care that our mouth and our heart go together, that both our outward and inward deportment be acceptable in the sight of Him whom we are now addressing for Pardon and Forgiveness.

And when we have gone thus far toward the quieting our consciences, there is yet another condition to be performed, before we can reap the fruits of our Confession and Repentance; which is this, to be careful not only to abstain from a repetition of the like crimes, but to do all that in us lies to practise the contrary virtues, and to promote the cause of Truth and Goodness.

ON PSALM XXXVIII. 18. 57

For to be affected no farther than to ask pardon for an offence, is a sign of no great ingenuity, it is a sure evidence against us, that we have not duly considered the measure of our guilt, and that our resentment of it does not flow from a thorough compunction of heart. That we are no farther solicitous about it, than to provide against the ill consequences of it for the present, without fulfilling the conditions upon which that pardon must entirely depend.

And when men act upon these principles, when they imagine they have appeased the wrath of God by these slender performances; it will be no easy matter to persuade them to the contrary. If Confession can be used, as it is in the Romish Church, and Absolution obtained for the vilest offences, without any other act, but that of *external* shew, or any other purity, but that of *inward* hypocrisy, no wonder that men are so easy under the yoke of their Iniquities, and that Vice and Corruption are so predominant in the world. But this is not the case with those who profess the Reformed Religion: The doctrines of which, with respect

spect to the matter in hand, are so directly opposite to that which the Church of Rome teaches, that no man of common understanding can imagine that so lame and imperfect a Penance, as auricular Confession, and outward Sorrow, should be so effectual as "to blot out his iniquities, and to cause "that his sins should be remembered no "more." We are too well informed, that not only an humble and contrite heart is requisite to cast a veil over our abominations, but that we are to seal our Repentance by a new life. For in order to our salvation, it is not sufficient "that a man turn "away from the wickedness that he hath "committed; but that he also *do* that "which is lawful and right." This is so necessary a consequence of a true Confession or Acknowledgement of our sins, that no one can be sincere in the one, who is deficient in the other. For to what purpose is it to repent of some sins, and at the same time to be guilty of others? To what end is it that we "put off the old man, with his "deeds," if we do not put on the *new*? To what purpose is it to afflict ourselves for past abominations, if we are not active, and employed

employed in works of Goodness, and doing what we can to hasten our arrival at that port where we would be?

All this, as has been before observed, is so necessary a consequence of a genuine Repentance, that it is absolutely impossible to recover the favor of Almighty God without a due performance of it. And though there may be some circumstances attending this Duty, which may make the execution of it very difficult and uneasy, yet they will have no great influence upon an ingenious and considerate mind. Besides, what we suffer of this kind, we must be convinced, is the result of our own sin and folly. The wages of them, we know, is Death, irreparable Death; had not our merciful Redeemer atoned for it by dying for us. And therefore who would not mortify the Body, to save the Soul? Who would spend the short time that is allotted him in this life in making provision for the flesh, for a perishing earthly tabernacle, when he has a work assigned him of so different a nature, and to the due completion of which a Reward is promised, which nothing here can equal, and

and which we ourselves are not able to conceive? But,

Secondly, Let us suppose that length of time, forgetfulness, or many other circumstances, should have concurred to lessen the number of our sins; how are we to atone for what we cannot remember? There will be no great difficulty in answering this question. In order to this, I shall only premise, that there are few sins, which carry any great degree of guilt in them, that do not leave a lasting impression on the memory, and though a man may strive to forget them, it will be to no purpose. As long as the understanding remains unimpaired, so long the guilt will attend it; nothing but an utter deprivation of sense, can free us from the dreadful apprehensions of what is due to impenitent sinners; and should that happen, who could forbear looking upon this infliction as a fatal period of God's long-suffering and forbearance, and a dreadful presage of everlasting misery? But admit there are some sins, which men have in the hurry of life overlooked; in this case our Repentance and Humiliation should be
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the more fervent and devout; and our care in the due use of the remainder of our days, should be proportionably increased. This is the only atonement we can make for sins unobserved by us, or through length of time, or other circumstances quite forgot. But

Thirdly, Will not sincere Confession and Repentance, considered in the foregoing light, be an ample satisfaction for past offences, if the party has not wherewith to make satisfaction? If we were to answer by the general practice of the world in this case, we must say, No. But if according to the merciful declarations of the Supreme Being, we must allow this to be a sufficient Reparation. God has declared, that "a man shall be accepted according to what he has;" he expects no other amends from the vilest Criminal but a return to his Duty; and, for the future, a proper application of the gifts of Providence. And if we made this a rule of dealing with our fellow creatures, we must be content to remit the debt (however contracted) if the party is incapable of repaying it. The sorrow and distress of an Insolvent should not only force us

as it were into a Forgiveness, but should engage our farther assistance and consideration. And allowing his present circumstance to be the evident effect of his own Imprudence, yet, we should not aggravate his misery by our reproaches, but leave him to the chastisement of his own reflections.

It is sensible this will be objected to here, that if crimes of this nature were to be punished in no other manner, it would be too great an encouragement for the frequent repetition of them. Without doubt it would. And consequently, human wisdom hath ordained other punishments for these offences. But still a particular regard should be had to circumstances before they are put in execution. It would favor too much of severity to take a fellow-creature by the throat, and drag him to confinement, because he was not able at that instant to discharge his debt. Some patience and clemency is what the most undeserving have a sort of claim to in humanity, and if fair means, and other friendly trials prove ineffectual, and other circumstances will admit of it,

we may then endeavor to recover by law
what he retains by injustice.

But I would only observe to persons of
this cast of mind, who have it in their
power to expiate offences of this nature, and
do not, whatever success may attend their
dishonest and fraudulent practices in this
world, they can never reconcile them to a
state of salvation in the next. To expect
Remission without Restitution, a person
may as well hope to be saved without doing
one single act to deserve it. It is impossible
to be truly penitent without it, the horrors
of conscience will never cease, so long as we
refuse to render to all their dues. Can any
one reconcile the hopes of Heaven, with the
plunder of the Poor, and the oppressing of
the Fatherless and Widow? Can he expect
to find mercy in time of need, who has been
so cruel as to deprive the friendless of their
subsistence, and so inhuman, as to shut up
his bowels of compassion when they have
sued to him for relief? How shameful such
a behavior is in the eye of Heaven, and how
it will be punished in a future state, we are
sufficiently informed from Scripture. And
therefore

therefore if we expect to be received into the Mansions of Eternity, and " to dwell " with the spirits of just men made perfect, " we must make ample amends for every offence, and testify our Repentance by a complete submission to the Divine prescriptions. Nothing but this can contribute to remove the guilt of our offences, and induce God to pardon what we have done amiss, blaw

In short, he that *confesseth*, must also *for-
sake* his sins; and he that forsaketh his sins, must apply himself to works of goodness. For the bare refraining of a man's self from the sins of commission, will never excuse his neglect of positive Duties. It is very possible for many a one to keep himself unspotted from the world, and yet be found wanting in actual goodness: But this behavior serves only to reflect shame upon him for what he omits. If he can mortify the body, by ceasing to make provision for the flesh, why cannot he feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and the like? If he can lift up his hands to God, what should hinder him, when he is in plentiful circumstances, *stated*.

ON PSALM XXXVIII. 18. 65

stances, from stretching them out to his indigent Brethren?

All those instances of true contrition we meet with in Scripture, all those eminent examples of Repentance, furnish us with a quite different account. They set no bounds to their concern for having incurred the Divine displeasure; sackcloth and ashes, streaming eyes, and aking hearts, were the constant attendants of their confession, with an unwearied application to God for Mercy and Forgiveness. What *David* did in the height of lust, he severely atoned for in the height of remorse. If he was a brute in the commission of the one, he appears to have been such a saint with respect to the other, that God was pleased to intitle him "a man after his own heart." For we are nowhere informed that he was guilty of any notorious breach of God's Law, after the case of *Bathsheba* and *Uriah*; but on the contrary, that the remainder of his life was spent in promoting the Honour and Service of his Maker.

Let us therefore, if we have followed him
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in his Sins, endeavor to imitate him in his Repentance: and as there are various degrees of the *one*, let us accordingly proportion thereunto the several degrees of the *other*. And as no one can be assured how far his Repentance will be available, let us be careful that we are not wanting in our measure of it, or that we do not depend too much upon the Merits of our gracious Redeemer. To this purpose I would recommend constant attendance on Public Worship, and certain set seasons for private Devotion: The *one* for daily Confession and public Thanksgiving, the *other* to bewail and repent of our own personal Sins and Wickedness. Thus we shall to all ends and purposes truly "confess our wickedness and be "sorry for our sin." Thus we shall be capable of communicating an additional degree of Joy to the Angels "who minister to our "salvation." And we shall provide for ourselves a treasure in Heaven, which God, the righteous Judge, shall administer to all those, who have "turned away from the wicked- "ness which they have committed, and "have afterwards done that which is lawful "and right."

S E R M O N



S E R M O N XVI.



J O B xix. 25.

For I know that my Redeemer liveth.

 **T** H E solemn and awful preface with which these words are introduced may sufficiently denote their great weight and importance. The person from whom they proceed, from the well-grounded assurance of what he asserts, seems to have lost all sense of outward Affliction, and to be under a kind of spiritual extasy and transport. That pressure of misfortunes which some time before had staggered his understanding, and almost tempted him to disbelieve a Providence, had since improved itself into such a confidence of a future Retribution, that all his complaints were silenced, his former disappoint-

ments forgot, and his present anguish swallowed up in the ravishing contemplation of future bliss, in visions of Glory hereafter.

" For I know that my Redeemer liveth,
" says he, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after
" my skin worms destroy this body, yet in
" my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall
" see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold,
" and not another." What a noble confession of Faith under such a severe trial of Misfortunes! How clearly does he distinguish his Redeemer through such a thick cloud of Affliction! How does he triumph over the calamities of this life, and the ill-grounded suggestions of his censorious Friends, in a certain persuasion of a blessed Resurrection! And having himself tasted the consolation of this Faith, how careful and earnest is he to perpetuate the words with which he introduces it? " O that my
" words were now written, that they were
" printed in a book, that they were graven
" with an iron pen and lead, in the rock
" for ever. For I know that my Redeemer
" liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter
" day upon the earth; and though after
" my

" my skin worms destroy this body, yet in
" my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall
" see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold,
" and not another."

This whole context hath been differently interpreted both by Jewish and Christian writers. And various explications have been given to shew that this prophetic speech had no reference to the general Resurrection; but that it implied only a certain persuasion that *Job* had of a change of circumstances; and a return of his temporal happiness. Which interpretation, instead of giving any true light into this passage, only obscures the most evident and obvious sense of it. For the word Redeemer, upon whose eternal existence *Job* grounds his assurance of a future compensation, cannot be applicable to any other person so well as to our blessed Saviour. And therefore we may reasonably presume that *Job*, who was so strict an observer of the law of God, and so truly sensible of his own corruption, could not be ignorant of the lapse of *Adam*, (which drew upon unhappy an entail upon his posterity) or of the Person who had engaged to atone

for it. He saw, we may be sure, with the eye of Faith the promised Propitiation; and from a sense of his own uprightness, he comforts himself with the lively expectation of being one day made perfect by his sufferings in a glorious Resurrection.

But did not the words themselves so manifestly discover to what they relate, it would nevertheless appear from several passages in this book, that *Job* could not speak them with a view of being restored to his former prosperity. For he had often expressed himself with a contempt of the good things of this life, and from his own observation and experience was perfectly convinced that there was nothing in this sublunary world sufficient to engage his more than ordinary care and solicitation. The instability of human affairs, was what he was so well acquainted with, that even in the height of his Prosperity he tells us, he was under constant apprehension of a change of fortune; and that he even wanted that satisfaction which generally attends those humbler and more obscure conditions.

" For the thing which I greatly feared

" com

" come upon me, and that which I was
 " afraid of is come unto me. I was not in
 " safety, neither had I rest, neither was I
 " quiet, yet trouble came." If therefore
 when he had all the instruments of Happiness about him, (before he was deprived of his Children, despoiled of his Estate, and afflicted in his own Person) he could complain of the trouble and solicitude which then attended him, what should induce him thus ardently and emphatically to express himself, if he only intended an hope of being restored to his former Prosperity; whilst at the same time he was not in a condition of enjoying it? What relief could all the advantages of Prosperity afford a person who in all appearance was already in the jaws of Death, and beyond the hopes of a recovery? And what should he mean by saying,
 " Though after my skin worms destroy this
 " body, yet in my flesh shall I see God;"
 If this implied nothing more than a return of his temporal Happiness?

But it is too evident, not only from the plain import of the words themselves, but likewise from the pathetic preface which

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immediately

immediately precedes them, that they implied greater and more material truths; nothing less than a solemn declaration of Faith in the promised Messiah could be intended by his saying, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Then he goes on to describe him in another capacity; as a person to whom we are one day to give account for all our Thoughts, Words and Actions: As one who shall be intrusted to determine the final condition of all men, according to their respective deserts; these words, "And that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth," not being explicable any other way, than by applying them to the Messiah's coming to Judgement. He then proceeds, with the same prophetic spirit to assert that important article of our Faith, the Resurrection; "Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." He now began to apprehend his approaching dissolution; and after having reflected upon the corruption his body would suffer when separated from the soul, he comforts himself with the assurance of their being one day reunited, and that "in his flesh he should see God; whom, he

" adds,

" adds, he should see for himself, and his
 " eyes should behold, and not another,
 " though his reins were consumed within
 " him." What a clear Prediction this of the
 joys of the Beatific Vision, and the exquisite
 Happiness that will attend those who shall
 be adjudged worthy to go away into Life
 eternal! So that from this general concu-
 rrence of circumstances, we may easily see
 what relation the words in the Text have,
 and what holy *Job* intended, when he said
 " I know that my Redeemer liveth." And
 therefore in the sequel of this Discourse I
 shall observe to you,

First, What we are to apprehend by the
 word *Redeemer*; And,

Secondly, How *Job* came by this Know-
 ledge of him. And then apply what
 has been said to ourselves.

First then, For what we are to apprehend
 by the word *Redeemer*.

In the Old Testament we meet with many
 and various accounts of it, as the *Septuagint*
ἐκλύων με μίλλον renders it. And because the
 general

general sense of it, as it is there applied, intends only present or temporal deliverances, (in which the Law itself indeed did principally consist) and these deliverances were to be procured by temporal Redeemers, this might be the chief reason, why those who were acquainted with the letter of the Law, insisted so much for the same meaning in the words of the Text. Thus in the twenty-fifth chapter of *Leviticus*, we read " when
" any one was sold or taken captive, that
" his Brother, or any of his nearest kin,
" was to pay his price or ransom." The same right was also vested in the same persons for the Redemption of a Mortgage, or any the like engagement of land: " If
" thy Brother be waxen poor, and hath sold
" away some of his possession, and if any of
" his kin come to redeem it, then shall he
" redeem that which his Brother hath sold." It was also incumbent upon them, in case of the Murder of any of their Brethren or Relations, to do justice to the suffering party, and to avenge his blood, by prosecuting the Law against the Murderer. Thus the Avenger of blood, is the Redeemer of the person murdered, by retaliating the same punishment

punishment upon the injurious party. Because as the deceased could not be recompensed any other way, so the Law adjudged it necessary to punish the offender with Death, to prevent the farther ill consequences which Murder unrevenged might occasion; *Numb. xxxv. 19.*

It is sometimes likewise taken in a more general and unrestrained sense, for a Deliverer of a People or Nation, or an Avenger of wrongs and injuries in general; and then it is applicable only to God. Thus we read in the seventy eighth Psalm, when the children of *Israel* were punished for their incredulity and hardness of heart, then "they remembered that God was their strength, " and that the high God was their Redeemer." In this sense of the word it is, that holy *David*, when his mind was oppressed with the reflection of some extraordinary sin (which probably might be the occasion of that civil War his subjects were then engaged in) so fervently intreats God in the twenty-fifth Psalm, "That he would " redeem *Israel* out of all his troubles." Thus likewise after the destruction of the Temple

Temple by *Nebuchadnezzar*, the inspired Author of the seventy-fourth Psalm earnestly addresses God for a release from the miserable calamities and reproaches which they then sustained in their captivity. "O! think," says he, upon thy Congregation, whom thou hast purchased and redeemed of old. "Think upon the tribe of thine inheritance, and Mount *Sion*, wherein thou hast dwelt."

And lastly, The Prophet *Isaiab* (who is likewise stiled the Evangelical Prophet, because of the many lively representations he gives of the Messiah) applies the word Redeemer to our blessed Saviour. In his fifty-ninth chapter, verse twentieth. "And the Redeemer shall come to *Sion*, and unto them that turn from transgression in *Jacob*." It is in this sense the Apostle to the *Romans* cites the words in the eleventh chapter, verse twenty-sixth. "And so all *Israel* shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of *Sion* the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from *Jacob*."

So that CHRIST is our Redeemer in all the beforementioned acceptations. For as under

der the Law, the Redemption of the Inheritance, or the person of the poor Brother sold or taken into captivity, was to be made by his next of blood; so CHRIST, who was our Kinsman after the flesh, hath ransomed or redeemed us from the power and tyranny of the Devil. And this Redemption he procured for us, not only by virtue of his interest in us as our Creator, but also by virtue of his Affinity; by being the Son of *Adam* as well as the Son of God. For as the Apostle to the *Hebrews*, chap. ii. 11. observes, " He that sanctifieth, and they who
" are sanctified, are all of one: for which
" cause he is not ashamed to call them Bre-
" thren." The eternal Son of God became incarnate, that he might have the right of Redemption, and recover the Inheritance which we had forfeited. The price of the Redemption was no less than his own precious blood. For, before the Justice of God could be appeased, an equivalent satisfaction was to be made to atone for the offence done to infinite Majesty. And nothing less than the blood of CHRIST could be a sufficient Ransom in this respect. The favor to be purchased was the eternal enjoyment
of

of the ever Blessed; the sentence to be reversed, no less than that of everlasting Death; and therefore, none was qualified to procure the one, or reverse the other, but CHRIST our Redeemer. It was he, as the Apostle speaks, that "spoiled Principalities and Powers." And as he himself speaks in another place "bound the strong man, and took away his goods:" to the end, as the Apostle observes, "that he might destroy him that had the power of Death, that is, the Devil; and deliver them who through fear of Death were all their life-time subject to bondage." So that it is in this sense CHRIST is the Propitiation for our sins, having redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us." Thus it is we are to apprehend it in the Text, and in all other places where it is applied to our blessed Saviour.

And this brings me, in the

Second place, To consider how *Job* came by this knowledge of a Redeemer.

I have before hinted that holy *Job* (from that

that upright and religious character the Author of his life has given us) could not well be supposed to be ignorant of the fall of *Adam*, and the fatal consequences which attended it. For as there was a promise made by God, that the Tempter who had been the Author of *Adam's* defection, should be overcome himself by one who should proceed from the loins of *Adam*; without doubt the Faithful in those days were very careful in conveying down this Promise to succeeding generations. And though this might not be so clearly expressed, either as to the manner or time when it should happen; yet it must undoubtedly administer great hope and consolation to such as walked by Faith, and expected the promised Redemption.

And if there was any difficulty at first in interpreting this Revelation, this difficulty must be removed upon the repetition of the same promise made to *Abraham*; where, as the effect of his Righteousness, God promised to reward him with the land of *Canaan*, "that kings should proceed from his loins, and that in him and his Seed, all the Nations of the Earth should be bless-

"ed." Or probably *Job* might receive conviction of a Redeemer by a particular Revelation. For the Apostle to the *Hebrews* assures us, "God did at sundry times, and
"in divers manners, speak in times past
"unto the Fathers." So that *Job* might come to this knowledge either by *one* or both these ways. In short, it must be founded either upon the certainty of God's Revelation, recorded in the third chapter of the book of *Genesis*, verse 15. "The seed of the
"woman shall break the Serpent's head." He might be as confident of a Redeemer upon this promise, as if he had had ocular demonstration of him. And it is in this sense *Abraham* is said, *John* viii. 56. "to
"have seen the day of the Messiah." And agreeable to this, we are told in the eleventh chapter of the *Hebrews*, verse 13. "These all
"died in Faith, not having received the
"promises, but having seen them afar off,
"and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." Or he might, as I observed before, receive confirmation of this Faith by a particular Revelation. For it is not to be questioned but that in those days there was a sufficient discovery of a Redeemer

deemer made them, and that the eyes of Believers were then upon him. He was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," and represented to mankind under types and promises. He was the Joy of all ages, even of those who lived before the completion of this Promise, before he became God Incarnate, and died for our sins. And therefore our faith should be as lively as that of the Patriarchs, and we should believe in him whom we have not seen. We should as sincerely love and rejoice in Him as if we had conversed with him bodily. For we have this advantage, History is not so dark as Prophecy. It is abundantly more easy to believe what is past, where we have the suffrage and experience of so many ages before us, than to expect what is to come. The mystery is now more clearly shewn to us, since the exhibition of our Saviour, than before. Therefore, according to our advantages, so should the increase of our faith be. We should be able to say with St Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him."

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But then again, we Christians know he is our Redeemer, by the discovery of his word, and his supernatural concurrence to his own Resurrection. For as without the former, we should be abandoned to blind and uncertain conjectures, and utterly deprived of all real and substantial peace: so without the latter, we should have wanted those blessed assurances of a future state, which now every sincere and well-meaning Christian, when he is conversant in his duty, and offering up his petitions to the Throne of Grace, must be sensible of. Without these, we should be troubled at every storm, and tossed with every wave; we should distrust our Almighty Guide, who is at the helm of our affairs, and think we were safe in nothing. Our life would have been one continued scene of trembling, and the event of all our undertakings uncertain. But now, blessed be God, we see all these uneasinesses removed at the glorious Resurrection of our Redeemer; the body of sin, with which we were before hampered, destroyed; and

“ Life and Immortality brought to light by
“ the Gospel.” So that whatever perplexity
we meet with as to the events and conse-

quences

quences of things here, yet this divine assurance will comfort us with the thoughts that CHRIST is alive at God's right hand; and that he will infallibly reward those who suffer for his sake with a crown of Glory eternal in the Heavens. So that if the floods lift up their voice, and all things threaten ruin, we have this comfortable reflection to succour us, the LORD our Redeemer liveth; and "though the waves are mighty, and rage horribly, yet the LORD who dwelleth on high is mightier."

So that "though we walk through the valley of the shadow of Death," and all external comforts fail us, yet we "know that our Redeemer liveth," and that He will prove our nearest and best Friend, when all others forsake us; that he will not only superintend us in our dangers and difficulties, but will infallibly, sooner or later, procure us an happy issue out of all our Afflictions. Knowing, as the Apostle speaks, "that he which raised up the Lord JESUS, shall raise us up also by JESUS. For which cause we faint not."

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This Persuasion will likewise be of great comfort to us under the many calumnies and reproaches of evil tongues, and the ill-natured prejudices and misconstructions of men. When *Job's* Friends suspected that he was turned Reprobate, and was fallen from the Grace of God, that holy person recommends his cause into the hands of his dear Redeemer, who was then with God in Heaven making Intercession for him. He did not concern himself with the partial judgment that was made by man, but appeals to the Sovereign Judge; He, who one day was "to bring to light all the secrets of the heart," and according to whose decision "every man was to have praise of God."

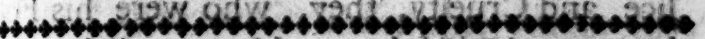
This persuasion will likewise yield us great consolation against the fears of Death. The thoughts of dwelling with our Redeemer in eternal life, will very much enlighten that gloomy and melancholy passage we are to make before we can enjoy Him. Though we die, our Redeemer liveth, "who is the Resurrection and the life; and whosoever believeth in him shall not die eternally." So that the grave is not a prison but

but a place of repose; and Death, not a final extinction of our Being, but a passage into Glory. For when CHRIST arose, he virtually drew all the Elect out of the grave with him; and when he ascended up on high, he not only took possession for himself, but went to prepare a place for us likewise: And will undoubtedly distinguish those who have merited the great price of their Redemption in that day "when Wisdom shall be justified of her children." When "the Son of man shall come in the clouds of Heaven, and in the glory of his Father, with his holy Angels."





SERMON XVII.



JOHN xvi. 13.

*Howbeit, when the Spirit of Truth
shall come, he will guide you into
all Truth.*

OUR blessed Saviour being about
to leave this world to go to his
Father, acquaints his Disciples in
the preceding chapter, with the
hard usage they would meet with from the
world upon the account of their profession.
He exhorts them to bear with patience what-
ever they might suffer upon his account, by
reminding them how much he had borne
upon theirs. He gave them no reason to
think to be safe from Persecution, but ra-
ther to expect it, from the particular in-
stance of his own sufferings; for, as he
adds, the servant is not greater than his

" Lord ; if they have persecuted me, they
 " will persecute you also." If one " who
 " knew no sin, neither was guile found in
 " his mouth," could not escape their Ma-
 lice and Cruelty, they, who were his Fol-
 lowers and Disciples, could not well hope or
 expect it. However, he assures them he
 would supply them in his absence, and be
 with them in their Afflictions and Distresses,
 by the internal communion of the Spirit of
 Truth, whom in this and the two former
 chapters he calls by the name of COMFORTER.
 He tells them, he " had many things to
 " impart to them, but they could not
 " bear them now," by which are gene-
 rally conceived to be meant things which
 related to their own functions, and the state
 and regimen of the Church; not any other
 doctrinal Points or Articles of Faith, for
 he had before assured them, in the fifteenth
 chapter, verse 15, that every thing of that
 nature, which he had heard from his Father,
 he had made known unto them, but only
 their fuller and clearer explication, with cir-
 cumstances peculiar to his ascertained wor-
 ship, the abolition of the ritual Law, and
 other alterations which would succeed, and
 which

which they would be perfectly informed of by the coming of this holy person among them.

And therefore it is for this reason they were commanded to tarry at Jerusalem till they should receive this power from on High; which would fully instruct them in the work of their Ministry, correct their previous errors in matters of opinion and judgment, and give force and efficacy to all their ordinances. In a word, they would be secure under his guidance from all manner of fallibility, and rendered utterly incapable of deceit, artifice, and dissimulation. When

he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all Truth.

From these words I shall observe to you,

First, The quality of this holy person, styled in the Text "the Spirit of Truth."

Secondly, The nature and manner of his coming. And,

Thirdly, The sacred work and employment he comes about: "He will guide you into all Truth."

First,

First, We are to observe the quality of this holy person, stiled in the Text "the Spirit of Truth:" which is no less than the third Person in the Trinity, very and eternal God: incomprehensible in his Nature, infinite in his Perfections, and in all other divine Excellencies equally the same with God the Father, and God the Son, distinct from both only in Person: in their Nature and Perfections, indivisible. And though to God the Father be ascribed the Creation of the Universe, to God the Son the Redemption of Mankind, yet is the Holy Ghost equally concerned, equally participant of our praise in either or both of these respects. It was that "Holy Spirit that moved upon the face of the waters," that spake this world into being, and "breathed into our nostrils the breath of life." It was that Holy Spirit that foresaw the fall of man, that spake in times past unto the Fathers by "the Prophets," that became God incarnate, and died for our sins. And it is to this holy Person we stand indebted for all our accomplishments both of soul and body, to whom every good and perfect gift, every moral

moral excellency, and every thing that is laudable and just, must be ascribed.

But farther: If we observe that particular stress and emphasis which our blessed Saviour lays upon the demonstrative Pronoun in the Text, when *He*, the Spirit of Truth, shall come, it must be very obvious and manifest that he speaks of a Person distinct from Himself. And in some verses before the Text, and in the preceding chapter, he attributes certain operations to Him as particular effects and consequences of his coming. He was to reprove the world of Sin, of Righteousness, and of Judgment; he was to receive of the Father, and to testify of CHRIST: All which do necessarily presuppose a distinct Person from the Father and the Son.

It is true indeed his Nature and Essence were communicated, as well as communicative of that of God the Father, and God the Son. For our Saviour tells his Disciples, that he was to take of his, and give it unto them: And that all things that the Father had, were his. Without

doubt

doubt he proceeded from, and was compounded of something of them both, whether we call him the consubstantial or co-eternal Communion, or as the Schoolmen, the essential bond and Unity of the never to be divided Trinity.

But it would be too rash and presuming for finite Reason to pretend to account for the nature of this mystery of a Trinity in Unity, three Persons but one God. It may suffice that the God of truth has assured us of it, without being so curious as to pry into the manner of it. The holy Scriptures are as clear and explicit as to the distinct personality of the Holy Ghost, as they are of the Divinity of the Father, by whom all those Miracles were wrought in the Old Testament, or that of the Son, which is so apparent in the New. And therefore, as they inform us, that all the properties of a distinct person are there attributed to this Spirit of Truth promised in the Text, and at the same time teach us, that in the undivided Essence of God there are three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, we ought to rest satisfied that this is the ge-

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nuine meaning of this divine Revelation; though we cannot comprehend, by our reason, how, without any division, *one* and the *same* Essence can be in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. In this case, our Reason is to be brought into obedience to Faith; and we are by no means to be so rash as to offer violence to manifest and clear Texts of Scripture, which do so plainly teach a plurality of Persons in the Godhead; merely because we cannot comprehend them.

So that we may safely, by following the revelation made in Scripture of this Holy Spirit, define him to be the third Person in the Godhead, "not made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding from the Father and the Son;" with whom the Father and the Son created all things, visible and invisible, and doth preserve and govern all creatures; that he was sent down upon the Apostles in a visible manner, as on *this* day, and now invisibly upon *those* who belong to his Church; that by his Word and Sacraments he may regenerate, sanctify and comfort them, and prepare them for eternal life. Thus much is evidently implied in the
holy

holy Scriptures. Therefore I shall proceed in the

Second place, to consider the Nature and Manner of his coming.

As to the reason of his descending in so different a manner upon the persons of the Apostles from what he ever did before, either in the times of the Patriarchs or under the legal Dispensation; with "a sound from Heaven as of a rushing mighty wind," and rendering himself so conspicuous in the form of *cloven tongues*, it may be presumed, that as the Christian Church was then in its infancy, this visible appearance of the Holy Spirit upon the persons and minds of the Apostles, might give full Confirmation to those who were Witnesses and Spectators of his Glory, and the wonderful effects of it, that their persons were sacred, and the Doctrines which they taught were the divine Breathings and Inspirations of the Spirit of God. And that as the exhibition of the old Law, or initiation of the Jewish Church, was introduced by the awful appearance of fire on Mount Sinai, so likewise the beginning

ginning of the Christian Church should be consecrated by the same glorious appearance of the Divinity, upon the persons he had appointed to establish it.

Indeed it has been the opinion of some, that this Miracle or Gift of Tongues was not wrought on the minds of the Apostles, but only upon the understandings of the different People, Nations, and Languages who heard them, that *their* ears were prepared to receive and understand what the Apostles spake, in the same manner as if they had spoken to them in their own languages. But there is no reasonable ground or foundation in Scripture for such a supposition. For amongst that variety of gifts which St Paul tells us "the Spirit distributeth to every man to profit withal," are the diversities of tongues; which are generally allowed to refer to that supernatural change which was wrought upon the minds of the Apostles, by the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. And we are expressly told, in the second chapter of the *Acts*, "that they, the Apostles, began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

* ance.* But admit the Apostles spoke only in their own native dialect, yet the Miracle must be as manifest, and the effect raise as great an astonishment, how such a number of people, of so many different countries, should be brought, and that so suddenly, to conceive what was delivered to them in a language they never had learned. So that if we take the effect either way, the Miracle will be the same.

As to the particular form of his appearance, or why he should assume the similitude of cloven tongues, nothing certain can be depended on. However, it may be presumed that as the first generations after the flood were dispersed by a multiplicity of languages, upon a wicked attempt to build a Tower whose top was to reach to Heaven; so this gift of tongues might gather together in *one*, the Children of God which were scattered abroad. And indeed we find the happy consequence of it was such, that "fear" came upon every soul; and that day there "were added to the Church about three thousand souls." As to the particular time of the Epiphany of the blessed Spirit in the manner

manner before mentioned, many material reasons may be urged. But I shall only observe, and what seems to be the more immediate intent of the wise Providence of God, that his coming on the feast of Pentecost, may not only supersede the annual oblation of the two *wave loaves* mentioned in *Leviticus* xxiii. 17. which was a token of the Jewish harvest being finished; but likewise that as at this time, as well as a great while before, there was a general expectation of the coming of the Messiah; and that this expectation had brought together to *Jerusalem* devout men, from every nation under Heaven: There could not have been a more convenient season wherein to certify the Gentile world of his Messiahship, than at this juncture. And it is highly probable that to some of them, who were just and devout, and waited for the Consolation of *Israel*, that it might be revealed to them by the Spirit of God, as it was to holy *Simon*, that they should not see death till they had seen the Lord's CHRIST. Or if it was not revealed to them in this manner, it is evident, by that general resort of people to *Jerusalem*, that they were under some particu-

lar assurances of their Redemption. For we read in the third chapter of *St. Luke*, upon the appearance of *John* the Baptist in *Judea* (which was about four years before the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles) that "all men mused in their hearts whether he was the CHRIST, or no." And that it was for this reason he declared that he was not, but describes Him to them in the following manner; "there is one that cometh after me, whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with Fire. Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather the wheat into his garner, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." And we are likewise assured by the same Evangelist, chapter xix, that during the time our Saviour was entertained by *Zaccheus* the Publican in his passage through *Jericho*, there was a general expectation in the hearts of those who sat at meat with him, that the kingdom of God would immediately appear. And it was upon this mistaken opinion of theirs, that our blessed LORD thought it requisite by a Parable to undeceive them. So

that

that the principal reason why the Spirit of God manifested itself at this time upon the persons of the Apostles, seems to be grounded upon that general expectation which both Jews and Gentiles were under of that great change which would shortly happen in *Jerusalem*, whither they had assembled upon certain assurance of its taking effect, though they were entirely mistaken as to the nature and manner of it. And this brings me, in the

Third place, To consider the sacred work and employment the Holy Spirit comes about. "He will guide you into all Truth."

There is not perhaps any argument to be produced which proves the Divinity of the Holy Ghost in a more forcible manner, than the nature and quality of his commission, wherewith he was sent to guide and assist the Apostles in the propagation of the Christian Faith. It being impossible for any thing less than an Infinite and All-powerful Agent to effect what is so particularly ascribed to him in the holy Scriptures. For we find in the fifth chapter of the *Acts*, "after the

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" conversion

" conversion of a great multitude to the
" faith, by the preaching of *Peter*, and the
" curing the Cripple who sat for alms at the
" beautiful gate of the Temple ;" that there
was so great an unanimity, such a spirit of
Zeal and Charity for each other, that they
are said to be " of one heart and of one
" mind ; that those who were possessors of
" Houses or Lands, sold them " to relieve
the necessities of their indigent Brethren,
and " brought the money, and laid it at the
" Apostles feet, and distribution was made
" to every man according as he had need."
And that particularly one among the rest,
whose name was *Ananias*, sold a possession,
and kept back part of the price, making his
wife privy to it. But upon his coming to
offer it to the Apostles, he was severely re-
primanded by *Peter*, and made a terrible
example of divine Vengeance for his hypo-
crisy : " for he fell down, and gave up the
" Ghost. And about three hours after, we
" are informed, that his wife (who was a
" convert to the Christian Faith) not know-
" ing what was done, came in, and upon
" her answering *Peter* according to the di-
" rection of her Husband, she suffered the
" same

" same fate, for she fell down straightway at
" his feet, and yielded up the Ghost." Now
this is so extraordinary an instance of Power
and Omniscience together, that no one, I
believe, who considers the effect, can doubt
of the cause. *Peter* could never be supposed
to have detected this himself, had not the
Spirit of Truth revealed it to him before.
Or if he had, he could not have punished
it in so exemplary a manner without some
supernatural concurrence. Indeed why this
punishment of *Ananias* and *Sapphira* should
be executed in so signal and sudden a man-
ner, much may be inferred; if we consider
only the particular state of the Church, and
how necessary it was for the wise Providence
of God to interpose at this juncture. For
had they escaped the detection of *Peter* and
the other Apostles, they would have been
apt to have suspected that their Profession
was a cheat, and that the Spirit of God was
not in them. Besides, this would have been
encouragement for them to have proceeded
farther; and to have infected the minds of
the rest of their Brethren. And therefore
the forbearance or suspension of punishment
for this crime, was not thought requisite by

infinite Wisdom : for he foresaw the dangerous consequences of such a forbearance ; and though these two persons were the only criminal instances of this kind among the three thousand that believed, yet the permitting this evil to pass unpunished might have been a motive for others to have done the like. Besides, the Apostles themselves, who were left to propagate the Christian Faith, would by degrees have sunk in their esteem, and their authority would not have been so generally regarded. And therefore, to prevent what might have happened in case punishment was not inflicted, the Holy Spirit of God reveals their wickedly concerted design to *Peter*, and commissions him to punish the fact in the manner before related : partly to deter others from doing the like, and partly to establish the Credit and Authority of the Apostles.

Thus likewise it is farther remarkable that the Apostles instituted no ordinances for the Conduct and Government of the Church, without the immediate assistance and direction of this Spirit of Truth. For as men, they might have erred in doctrinal points, and

and brought their Profession into discredit. And therefore we read in the fifteenth chapter of the *Acts*, when they were assembled together in Council, and ordained that Canon which was necessary for the Gentile Disciples to observe, they declared it was ordained by the Holy Ghost, in the following manner. " For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things," and so on.

For the Apostles were not ignorant that their decrees could not be binding, if not built on the Authority of Him who is God. When therefore they say, " it seemed good to the Holy Ghost," they signify to the Christians to whom this Canon was directed, that this determination, was the determination or decree of God himself. For as it is the peculiar Prerogative of God alone to make laws for his Church, so the Apostles did not define it as done in their own names, but in that of the Holy Ghost. Agreeable to this, we are informed, that when St Paul had laid several prudential injunctions on his *Corinthian* converts, he declares he

had his Authority from the Holy Spirit; and says, "I think also that I have the Spirit of God." Indeed this particular way of expression, *I think*, hath induced some to believe, that St Paul spake this only in a doctrinal, not in a prophetic manner. But this error they have run into by not observing the usual manner of his speaking in these cases. It was only an indication of his great Humility, who would have none think of him above what he was in reality. Thus likewise when he had given them Rules and Ceremonies concerning divine worship, he insists on it, that all who should be acknowledged as Prophets, or inspired, should own this his authority. "If any man, says he, think himself to be a Prophet, or Spiritual, let him acknowledge, that the things which I write unto you are the Commandments of God."

And as the Spirit of Truth was the Apostle's principal Guide and Director in all their Institutions, which related to the Government of the Church; so likewise it was he which assigned to each their proper work and place, whither they were to go and preach

preach the Gospel. For we read in the sixteenth chapter of the *Acts*, "that when *Paul* and *Silas* had gone through *Phrygia*, and the region of *Galatia*, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in *Asia*. After they were come to *Mysia*, they assayed to go into *Bithynia*; but the Spirit suffered them not." This particular instance of Scripture, with many others to the same purpose, may serve to illustrate the Divinity of the Holy Spirit. For as none but God could thus direct and restrain the progress of the Apostles, so also it is He alone that can know where the Elect reside, before such time as the Gospel is preached to them. And though, because of our Saviour's strict charge to his Disciples, that they should not depart from *Jerusalem* till they had received the Promise of the Father, *St Peter* seemed to imagine, that God intended only the Recovery and Salvation of the *Jews*, his peculiar people; yet by a vision at *Joppa*, he is informed, that the glad tidings, which he, as well as the rest of the Apostles, were to publish to the world, were not confined to the Jews only, but that every nation that feareth God, and worketh

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"eth Righteousness," would be equally acceptable to Him.

So likewise, when any of the Apostles were apprehended and put into Custody for the cause of Christianity, this Spirit of Truth attended them in their confinement,—comforted them by his presence,—and, in his own good time, to the great consternation and surprise of their enemies, effected their deliverance. This was one method the Wisdom of God thought fit to make use of, not only to confirm the Apostles in their commission, but likewise to convince the unbelieving part of mankind of their Authority. For it cannot be supposed but that those miraculous deliverances of the Apostles, when they were put into the common hold, must excite astonishment in many, how *they* who were imprisoned the night before, and attended with a Guard before the doors, should without any visible violence on the prison itself, or knowledge of their escape to their Keepers, be found the next morning in the Temple, and teaching the people, which was apparent to every beholder. The consequence of this was such, that

that " when the Chief Priest, and Captain
 " of the Temple, heard these things, they
 " doubted of them whereunto this would
 " grow." Thus likewise, when Paul and
 Silas were imprisoned at Philippi, the Holy
 Spirit of God, to testify his resentment of
 their ill usage, affrights the City with " an
 " earthquake, which shook the foundation
 " of the prison, unbarred the doors, and
 " loosed the bands of those that were there-
 " in." By this extraordinary accident " the
 " Goaler with all his House believed on the
 " Lord Jesus ;" and the effect it had on the
 Governors of the City, who had committed
 them, was, " that they came and brought
 " them out, and desired them to depart out
 " of their City." Again, it is farther ob-
 servable, that the conduct and behavior of
 the Apostles, was under the immediate guid-
 ance and influence of the Spirit of Truth,
 mentioned in the Text, in that they never
 were detected in any immorality, or of be-
 having contrary to their Profession. Of the
 first we have sufficient confirmation, both
 by the general silence of their bitterest and
 most inveterate enemies, and the contrary
 information of Scripture. Of the latter,

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we have the most convincing proofs, by their unwearied diligence and industry in propagating the Christian Faith. Of their great Zeal and Integrity in persevering in their Profession, notwithstanding the threats and cruel treatment of the powers then in being; but likewise, after they had been confirmed in Grace, and had finished the work of their Ministry, they sealed the Truth of their Religion with their blood.

Many other instances of this nature might be mentioned to shew how much the Apostles were under the care and protection of this Spirit of Truth, and that every thing they did with relation to their apostolic office, was done by the guidance and direction of the Spirit of God; but what has been already observed, may be sufficient to convince any impartial hearer, that not only the actions of the Apostles were in effect the actions of Him who is Truth in the abstract, but that their very words were the effusions or breathings of this Holy Spirit.

Since therefore we have so many incontestable assurances for the belief of this;
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and since we have the sure Promise of our blessed Saviour, that he will be with us their successors to the end of the world, by the internal communion of his Spirit, to go before us in our way, and regulate all the faculties of our souls, according to the rules and directions of his word; how careful ought we to be to prepare our bodies for so glorious an Inhabitant, by observing, as near as is possible, those means which are prescribed in Scripture for the attainment of his divine presence. For if we will enjoy Him, we must endeavor to be like Him. We must learn those lessons of Truth he hath set us, and let them be grafted in our very souls. By such an obedience we shall be made happy instruments of transmitting to after-ages that pure and uncorrupt form of Doctrine which CHRIST and his Apostles hath left us. And the earnest of his Spirit, which he will shed abroad in our hearts, when we are thus qualified to receive it, will help to confirm us in all Truth and Goodness here, and secure to us everlasting Life and Happiness hereafter. To which blessed state, that he would bring us all, God of his infinite mercy grant, through JESUS CHRIST our LORD. *Amen.*

SERMON

and since we have the last Promise of our
blessed Saviour, that he will be with us their
instructors to the end of the world, by the
internal communion of his Spirit, to go be-
fore us in our way, and regulate all the ac-
tions of our souls, according to the rules
and directions of his word: how careful
ought we needs to prepare our bodies for so
glorious an habitation, by observing as near
as is possible, those means which are pre-
scribed in Scripture for the attainment of his
divine presence. And if we will enjoy him,
we must endeavor to be like him. We
must learn those lessons of Father and Son,
for us, and let them be graven in our very
souls. By such an obedience we shall be
made injoyful instruments of uniting to
others, the pure and uncorrupt love of
Father and Son, Christ and his Apostles.
With them, and the saints of his Spirit,
which he will shed abroad in our hearts,
which we are thus qualified to receive, will
help to comfort us in all Trials and Goodness
here, and secure to us everlasting Life and
Happiness hereafter. To which blessed state
that he would bring us all, God of his in-
finite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our

S E R M O N XVIII.

M A R K X. 18.

And JESUS said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God.

W HATEVER differences or disputes there have been in the world concerning the *other* Perfections and Attributes of God, all have concurred in *this*, that He is a Being of pure and perfect Goodness. The Platonists, among the several titles by which they were wont to address Him, often make use of the *τὸ ἀγαθόν*, and it is observable that *Good* and *God* are almost the same terms in our own language. *Optimus Maximus*, was the name whereby the *Romans* intitled Him. And indeed it is not possible to conceive of him as a Being of infinite

finite Power and Wisdom, without considering him at the same time as a Being of infinite *Goodness*. His Greatness shines no where amongst his works brighter than his Goodness. And we may be allowed to assert, that both his power in making, and his wisdom in contriving, were equally subservient to it. And as the works of his Creation, so likewise the records of his Government, serve to put this beyond all dispute; since *there* we must often have observed him stretching out his hand to supply the indigent, relieve the oppressed, and afford them in their distress what might fill their hearts with food and gladness. It is this the Apostle means by his Godhead, *Rom. i. 20.* which he compares with his Eternity and Power; "For the invisible things of Him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead!" The Godhead, that is, that which comprehends the whole nature of God, as discoverable to his creatures, was not known, nay was impossible to be thoroughly known, by the works of Creation. Otherwise there had been nothing reserved to be manifested

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in the day of the Messiah. But his *Goodness*, which is properly intended there by the term *Godhead*, was as clearly visible as his Power.

The Apostle therefore upbraids them with ingratitude, because the arm of his Power in creating made no due impression upon their minds, nor the beams of his Goodness wrought in them sufficient sentiments of gratitude. Their not glorifying God therefore, was a contempt of the former, and their not being thankful, was a slight of the latter. God, as a Being of infinite Power, is, to be sure, the object of our highest awe and reverence, and of our utmost gratitude and respect, as He is the source and origin of all goodness.

But all the Idolatry of the Heathens, is a clear testimony of their common sentiment of the Goodness of God: since the more eminently useful and good any person was in his generation, they thought he merited to be numbered among their Deities. The *Italians* esteemed *Pythagoras* as a God, because he was *φιλανθρωπιστας*: Hence it was,

that when the *Lystrians* saw a resemblance of the divine Goodness in the charitable and miraculous cure of one of their crippled citizens, they could not help, according to their usual apprehensions in cases of the like nature, mistaking *Paul* and *Barnabas* for Gods; and from the visible character of their Goodness, inferring their right to divine worship, and offering them the honor of a Sacrifice. Hence it was, that the Sun and Moon, because of their common benefit, came to be adored. And the more eminently useful and beneficial any thing was to them, the higher station they gave it in the rank of their Idols, and bestowed upon it a more solemn worship and adoration.

This then being premised, that God is a Being of absolute Goodness, the term *good* by way of distinction, cannot with any just propriety be applicable to any thing else but God.

And therefore all that remains to adjust the sense of the words before us, is to inquire how our blessed Saviour (who was God manifest in the flesh) came to interrogate

the young man upon the manner of his addressing him by that title. "Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God." This, upon first sight, seems to be a reprimand without any manner of reason. As God, it was a ceremonial highly necessary, and he would have been very justly charged with want of a proper address had he not done it: But our Saviour's reply to him upon his using this epithet, and inquiring how he came to make use of it, very plainly appears to arise from a quite different circumstance.

The Evangelist from whom the Text is taken, leaves us quite in the dark as to the person who makes the petition. "There came one running to Him," is all the account we have of him. But St Luke describes him as to his dignity, and styles him a certain *Ruler*, that is, one of Authority among the Jews. And therefore one who lived under the *Mosaic* Institution, who thought everlasting Felicity was to be purchased by the works of the Law, without Faith in the Messiah. The answer that our Saviour gives to his question leaves him no

hopes of the Happiness of another world by the works of the Law, unless they were perfect and answerable to every other divine Precept. And the reason why he questioned him upon giving him the title of *good* was, because he considered him no farther than as *man*; which title, as *such*, was by no means applicable to him.

Indeed some Commentators have been of opinion that our Saviour, by his challenging him for using this epithet, would have persuaded him likewise to an acknowledgment of his Divinity: since by saluting him with so great a title, which the Jews never afforded their most eminent Doctors, he might the more easily be induced into a belief of him as God, as well as *Good*.

The *Arians* insist much upon this passage to corroborate their denial of the Divinity of CHRIST; because, say they, he did not acknowledge himself *good*, therefore he did not acknowledge himself God; Goodness being a title due and properly belonging to the supreme Being only. But here they seem quite to have mistaken the intention of our

Saviour

Saviour. By this reply he does not deny his *Deity*, but only reproves him for calling him *good*, when as yet he had not confessed him to be more than man. He beheld him in the flesh, but he did not consider him withal as invested with the fulness of his Godhead. He gave him a title which he could not justify without accounting him God as well as *Good*. So that here is not the least shadow of a denial of his own Divinity, but only a kind and charitable endeavor to lead the person here addressing him into an acknowledgment of him as God.

And indeed, if we consider how well qualified he came for such a confession, how rigid an observer he had been of the works of the Law, and how seemingly willing he was to put in execution any duty that had been hitherto, either through ignorance or misconstruction, omitted or perverted, it was no wonder that our blessed LORD should be so taken with his behavior, as to *love* him, and afford him, nay lay before him, the only mean for the obtaining that important request upon which his question turned: " Good Master, what good thing shall I do, " that

"that I may lay hold of eternal Life?"
 Which occasioned the reply in the Text;
 "Why callest thou me good? There is none
 good but one, that is God."

In speaking therefore to these words, I
 shall, in the *first* place, observe, what we
 are to understand by the epithet *Good*, as ap-
 plicable to God: And then,

Secondly, I shall propose some instances of
 it. And,

Thirdly and lastly, I shall endeavor to ob-
 viate some objections which have been made
 against it.

First, Now by the term *Good*, as applied
 to God, we are not to understand the Good-
 ness of his essence, or the Perfection of his
 nature, or any other of his Divine Attri-
 butes, so much as that unlimited bounty
 which shews itself in his works of Creation
 and Providence; this is the common ac-
 ceptation of what we call Goodness in the
 world. When we say, such a one is a good
 man, we mean either that he is holy in his
 life, or charitable or liberal in the proper
 distribution

distribution of his fortune. A *righteous* and a *good* man are indeed sometimes distinguished in Scripture, as in *Romans* v. 7. "For scarcely for a *righteous* man will one die; yet for a *good* man one would even dare to die." And as it fares with the liberal and tender-hearted, with regard to the uncommon influence they have over, and the respect which they receive from their fellow creatures in this life, so in a supereminent degree does the supreme Goodness claim our highest veneration for those gracious communications, or rather divine characters and resemblances which He has given us of himself.

And this attribute is the more to be revered and esteemed by us, as it presupposes a gracious inclination, or affection towards us. For what could move Him at first to create us, but to promote our Happiness, and make us capable of Immortality. No end or purpose of his own to serve, could be the motive or intention of our existence. His own all-sufficiency will not by any means admit of such a supposition. His Goodness, we may be sure, co-operated with his Omnipotence; and from hence it was that man,

from mere matter, from the dust of the earth, as the Scripture informs us, " became " a living Soul." And from this great origin and fountain of Goodness, all the works of the Creation (the Devils themselves not excepted) bear upon them the unalterable mark and character of Good. All things that subsist, have a natural goodness of Being in them, derived to them by the power of God; and as such, the Devil is good, as being one of his creatures. And this kind of Goodness he still continues to enjoy (if that may be said to be an enjoyment) under his present apostasy. Nay the more of Being any creature hath, the more of this natural Goodness he stands possessed of. So that the Devil, as a Being of an Angelical nature (though he hath ceased to be morally good, and is divested of all righteousness by his apostasy) claims a greater share of this sort of Goodness than man, inasmuch as he carries about with him more marks of the excellency of God in regard to the greater extent of his Knowledge, Power, Capacity, and Understanding, which are perfections entirely belonging to the nature of an Angel.

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In a word, what we are to understand by the epithet Good, as applied to God, is that perfection and excellency of the Divine nature which at first moved Him to create all things, and still continues to govern and preserve them, for the benefit and advantage of mankind.

I shall therefore proceed, in the *Second* place, to propose some instances whereby this particular Goodness of God will manifestly appear.

The first and most obvious argument of his Goodness, is manifest from his works of Creation. God being infinitely wise, could not act without the highest reason, and for the highest end; what induced him to create, must be equal to those most excellent perfections which we conceive of him. But upon the most exact and deliberate consideration of them all, none can seem to challenge the honor of being the motive to this great work but his Goodness. We cannot help indeed when we survey the wonders of the Creation, admiring his Wisdom in ordering, and his Power in effecting, but
when

when we reflect upon the motive, ~~which~~ it was that influenced these two, and put them into motion, his Goodness must naturally offer itself to our consideration. Power therefore was the principle, Wisdom the rule, but Goodness the motive of this action. And as God, upon a distinct view of every day's work at the original Creation, stamp'd upon every thing the title of *Good*, so the general view of the whole frame must, at the same time, it raises our admiration, bespeak our highest gratitude for our Maker's Goodness and Liberality.

God, in the Creation, could have no end to serve but himself, because there was Nothing but himself. Finite things were in their own nature unable to make any accession to that which is infinite. Neither was it to make himself blessed, but to discover his own adorableness to his Creatures, and to communicate something of his own excellency to them. The Magnificence and Bounty which shew themselves in this lower world were not intended for his *own*, but his *creatures* benefit and convenience; that thereby they may trace the footsteps of his Providence.

vidence, and Care over them, and be led into a grateful esteem and love of their Benefactor.

But here it may be objected, that if the works of God in the Creation are good, it should seem inconsistent with the divine Goodness to suffer Sin to enter into the world; and thereby to permit man, who was the glory of the Creation, to fall from his state of Innocence. But this objection, instead of proving any real charge upon God's Goodness, is rather a farther exemplification of it. For before this change could happen, God furnished him with an ability to be happy. As he was a reasonable creature, he was of course free to follow the dictates of that reason; and not to be restrained from the liberty of acting according to his own sentiments. For to make a creature, and not let that creature act agreeably to the freedom of his nature, might have been a blot upon his Wisdom, and Perseverance in this case with regard to the laws and ends of his creation, must have been wholly owing to (what the brutal world are governed by) necessary Instinct. But it was the Good-

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ness of God to Men and Angels, to leave them in such a condition, as to be able to render him a voluntary obedience; and shall this Goodness be spurned at, because we have made an ill use of it, and turned it into wantonness? Besides, why should the permission of sin be imputed as a blemish upon the Creator, since the providing a method of Redemption to destroy the works of sin was the glorious consequence of that abused liberty? But if this, or no other reason could be alledged, in order to vindicate this dispensation of our Maker, yet as fallible creatures it would best become us not to impeach, but to adore the Divine proceedings; and to express ourselves in the admirable language with the Apostle; "O the depth of the riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

And now I am proposing to speak to some instances of the Divine Goodness to mankind, I shall confine myself to those chiefly which have been objected to by Atheists and profane persons, and produced as arguments

to shew that there is no Supreme Being, and consequently no Divine Providence or Superintendence over human affairs. These which I shall speak to at present are as follow: That if there was a God that made, or a Providence that governs the world, how comes it to pass that his Goodness is not equally communicated amongst his creatures? That some have a being and sense only, whilst others are endowed with sense and understanding? That extensive knowledge and gross ignorance are dealt to the same species? That pain and distress are the companions of some, who deserve a better fate; while others, of a different character, enjoy an undisturbed, uninterrupted ease and tranquillity? Why he hath selected so small a part of the world to communicate the Knowledge and Light of his Gospel, (by which all that are to be happy in a future state are to be judged) when, the far greater part of it continues in gross ignorance and obscurity?

Now all these objections would be attended with some weight, if it could be proved that any created Being was intirely destitute of

of some marks of the Divine Goodness. He that is unerring pronounced every thing good, distinctly, in its production; and the whole good, in its universal perfection. Though he made not all things equally good, yet he made nothing evil; and though one creature, in regard to its nature, may be better than another; yet an inferior creature, in regard to its usefulness, may be better than a superior one.

And indeed here seems to be their great mistake; they consider not that the Goodness of God to his creatures should be measured by their distinct utility to the common end. It would, without doubt, be better for a Brute or a Reptile to be a Man, and to be endowed with the faculties of Reason and Understanding, because this is an advance to a higher degree of Being; but this would by no means contribute to the better order and government of the Universe; if all were *rational* creatures, there would be wanting some of an inferior nature for their conveniency; and at the same time the Variety and Fulness of the Divine Munificence could not have been displayed.

It

It is therefore with the several species of the Creation, as with the members of the natural body, the head, in that it is the seat and organ of Understanding, is the most excellent member; but were the whole body a Head, what a deformed monster would it be? It would want Feet for motion, Arms for action, and thereby be deprived of putting in execution whatever it may be able either to conceive or determine. Nay, so far is this inequality from being any real charge upon God's Goodness, that it is rather a farther manifestation of it: for if God was equally good to all, it would destroy Commerce, and dissolve the bonds of human Society. Charity, which is one of the noblest, as well as most delightful duties, would be useless; and Prayer, which is excited by our wants, and is a necessary demonstration of the creatures dependence on God, would grow faint and languid, if not superfluous. But in the present seeming unequal dispensations of Providence, the Rich have sufficient motives for Praise and Thanksgiving, and the Poor matter enough for Prayer and Supplication.

But

But farther, if the supreme Being had been equally good to all, it would have looked like a *necessary*, and not a *free* act; but by the present inequality it is manifest that voluntary Liberty, not absolute Necessity, disposes of *his* actions; and that his Goodness is as much the pleasure of his will, as it is the efflux of his nature. And shall therefore the Goodness of the great Sovereign of the world be impeached, because He acts according to his own Wisdom and Pleasure, and not according to our weak Opinion and Judgment? Must our purblind Reason be the judge and director how and in what manner infinite and unerring Wisdom is to behave? Is God ever the *less* Good because there are numberless *Nothings*, which he is able to bring into being? Or does he do them any injustice by letting them remain in that *Nothing* from whence he could, if it so pleased him, draw them? Let this suffice, therefore, to obviate the first objection to the Goodness of God, which was, That he had not equally communicated his Goodness amongst his creatures.

The second objection to the Providence
and

and Goodness of God, is his permitting or allowing of Adversity and Affliction to befall the Righteous, while the Wicked enjoy undisturbed Ease and Tranquillity. The force of this objection would not easily be soiled, if it could be proved that punishments of this nature upon the persons before mentioned, could not be inflicted without a moral evil in the person who inflicts them; or that the persons on whom they happen, are by no means deserving of them; or that our being was limited to this life only, and no farther.—As God, the most just and upright person is impure in his sight, and he is intirely at his own liberty to take what methods he thinks fit to cleanse or do away that impurity. But then we are to consider, that he never afflicts but with design to heal; and where his judgments are, provided they are duly submitted to, there is mercy. Besides, calamitous circumstances or unfortunate events do not always carry with them the marks of the divine Vengeance. It would be very rash to judge of a man's inward disposition by his outward circumstances; and to entertain bad thoughts of him upon the score of some unfortunate event.

Such persons see no farther into punishments of this nature than the friends, but censurers of Job, (and perhaps in that age of the world they might have been better justified in their observations,) they have no regard to the design of their infliction, and the gracious ends proposed by them. They consider not that God doth not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men; or that when his arrows are gone abroad, it is not so much to punish, as it is to reclaim. We are assured, that "he delighteth not in the death of a sinner;" but is willing to try if by chastisement he can reduce him to obedience, and deter others, who are spectators of his wrath, from rashly tempting the same Vengeance. To the just and upright, therefore, the Judgments of God are trials of their patience and perseverance, and patterns for others to imitate under the like visitation. So that Judgments upon the righteous are so far from being an impeachment of the Divine Goodness, that they are really attended with great benefit, provided they make that use of them for which they were appointed. They are never dispensed, but in order to prevent a greater

greater evil, or to confirm them in their Virtue and Integrity. And therefore, as such, they may be looked upon as clearer marks of paternal affection, than what are discoverable in those who live in an uninterrupted course of Prosperity. There can be no room to question the Goodness of that Father, who, to prevent his Child's ruin, gives him proper chastisement, and so trains him up to Virtue and Honour. But it would be an instance of the most criminal Indulgence to leave a Child undisciplined to that misery which a bad Education would soon reduce him to. Our heavenly Father's great affection for us, is in nothing more apparent, than in that he is pleased to punish us in this life, that we might not be condemned hereafter. And it is certainly infinitely better for us to bear what his fatherly correction lays upon us now, in order to be acquitted, at the great day of retribution; than that the sufferings of this present life were an earnest and testimony of Divine Affection, and that they were dispensed only in order to give to us an eternal weight of Glory. So certain and beyond all dispute is that observation of the Apostle, that "whom the Lord

"loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every
"Son whom he receiveth."

But there is another circumstance that I mentioned, that may serve farther to invalidate the objection now before us, which was, That our existence is not limited to this life, and no farther. The world we are now in was never intended for our perpetual continuance; here indeed our Being commences, but it does not terminate. And therefore, the shortness and uncertainty of the time that is allotted us, should make us unconcerned about any worldly good or evil. If we expect to be rewarded in a future state, we should do our utmost to deserve it in this. Nothing should call us off from the object of our happiness, and every action should be so ordered as that the Glory of God, and the Good of our own Souls, may be promoted by it.

So that the argument drawn from the Prosperity of the Wicked, and the Affliction attending righteous and good Men in this life, is so far from impeaching the Justice or Goodness of God, that, in the present

state of things, there could be no real display of Virtue and Integrity without it. And the world would cease to be, what the inspired writers have so often and so fully assured us it is, a state of trial and probation, were things otherwise. Besides, without this dispensation, we should have been destitute of proper examples to animate our zeal and excite our imitation. To what purpose would have been those frequent exhortations in Scripture of "wrestling against" "Principalities and Powers; of putting on" "the whole Armour of God; of bringing" "the Body under subjection;" and the like; if there was no after-reckoning, no future recompence to such severe and self-denying observances?

If the hopes of so exemplary a conduct were limited to this life only, it would deserve the name of an extravagant folly, not of a superior virtue; and those who made it the governing principle of their behavior, would be of all men the most miserable.

This was the method of reasoning which one of the most learned and laborious

amongst the Apostles made use of. And though it was true in fact, with regard to his own sufferings, provided there was no future account to be given, yet he took care to make it demonstrable, by his eminent zeal and perseverance, that he was possessed with a different hope and expectation. He would never have rejected the pressing and affectionate advice of his friends, when they represented to him the danger he was going to run himself into by his intended journey to *Jerusalem*, if he had not been "persuaded
 " that the sufferings of this present life were
 " not worthy to be compared with the Glory
 " which should hereafter be revealed." He would scarce have subjected himself to stripes and imprisonment, or declared "that
 " he was ready, not to be bound only, but
 " to suffer for the Name of the Lord
 " Jesus;" if he had not been under the strongest conviction that his "sufferings in
 " this present state would work for him a
 " more exceeding and eternal weight of
 " Glory." It is for this reason he presses Christians so much and so often, that they
 " be sober, and hope to the end: that we
 " be followers of those, who through Faith
 " and

"and Patience inherit the Promises: And
 "that we must through much tribulation
 "enter into the Kingdom of God."

It were needless to pursue this Argument
 any farther, since a contrary supposal must
 destroy all the evidence of Miracles and
 Prophecy, subvert all Religion, defeat our
 immortal Hopes, and reverse the very actions
 and results of Virtue itself.

Let this therefore suffice to acquit the
 Goodness of God with regard to his severe
 dispensations to righteous and good men;
 that our Being is not to terminate with this
 life, but that there is a day set apart for a
 future Account, when the great Father of
 Spirits, the Judge and Saviour of Mankind,
 will distinguish between those who served
 God, and those who served him not: then
 "these shall go away into everlasting pu-
 "nishment, but the Righteous into life eter-
 "nal."

The next Argument that is produced to
 impeach the Goodness and Providence of
 God, is, That he has communicated the
 Light and Knowledge of the Gospel but to

a small part of the Universe, whilst a far greater part remains in gross ignorance and obscurity.

Now this objection is only grounded upon the present consequence of things, which may easily be proved to be a very disingenuous and unfair way of arguing. Or it implies, that because the other parts of the world, where the Christian Religion is not professed, that neither the Apostles themselves, nor their Successors ever preached the Gospel; and consequently that *they* had no opportunity of embracing it. This I take to be the whole force of the objection.

If they argue from the present event of things; they make themselves quite ignorant of the nature of the commission which CHRIST gave his Apostles; as well as the account which History affords us of their respective Travels, and of the Propagation of the Gospel. The commission which they received will not admit of any limitation to any particular place or kingdom, because they were commanded to "go into *all* the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." And, I believe,

lieve, if any one would take the pains impartially to inform himself how punctually the Apostles and their immediate Successors executed this commission, he would be pretty well satisfied that there was little or no ground for this objection.

As to the argument, because the Christian Religion is not at present professed in a great part of the world, this does by no means shew that it never was preached at all, or that men never had an opportunity of embracing it. Besides, the promise of our Saviour to his Apostles was not absolute and unconditional. It is true, he tells them, "Lo I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." But this is to be taken in a restrained, not in an unlimited sense. That is, so long as they are conforming themselves to that Doctrine and Discipline which he taught and preached himself, and which he made an absolute condition to be observed by all future Christians. We know that the frequent abuse of his Grace obliged him to withdraw the light of his Gospel from the *Asian* Churches, and to give them up to all the Ignorance, Barbarism, and Superstition

perdition that could possibly ensue upon so shameful an abuse. And this, it is more than probable, may be the reason, that *other* parts of the world still remain under the same darkness and obscurity: Which, because of the great distance of time since the event, may make it seem, as though "*their*" words, which the Scripture assures us, *we* were to go out into *all* lands, and *their* "sound unto the *ends* of the world," had never been heard of. But let God be true, and every man a liar. Can it with any appearance of reason be imagined, that God should intend so general a blessing to the world, as the coming of the Messiah was to introduce; and should nevertheless, contrary to that express Promise made to *Abraham*, which was delivered in universal terms, confine it to the narrow limits of that part of the world where Christianity is at present professed? Without doubt, time, and the many revolutions which have happened since the first promulgation of the Gospel, have very much altered the face of things; and because there are no footsteps or remains left of what was transacted so many years ago, it may make it seem as if a great part
of

of the promise remained still to be accomplished.

But let us not judge of the Veracity of God according to these slender appearances. We should be thankful that it is our peculiar happiness that the light of the Gospel still continues with us, however undeservedly. And we should make it our principal care, to do all that in us lies to prevent the removal of it from us; by shewing forth his Goodness "who has called us out of
" darkness into his marvelous light; by
" blessing the Lord God of *Israel*, who hath
" visited and redeemed his people;" and by fulfilling the great end of our Redemption,
" by walking before him in Holiness and
" Righteousness all the days of our life."

And now, upon the whole, give me leave to observe, that so long as we entertain proper notions of God, and consider him as the Creator and Governor of the Universe, we can never want arguments to defend either his Goodness in creating, or his Providence in governing the world. And as these are topics upon which a great part of the artil-

100 S E R M O N XVIII.

lery of Infidels have been long employed, so it will concern every one of us to be duly prepared to obviate all the Objections that can be offered, either to blast or weaken the belief of a Supreme Being, to impeach his Goodness, or to disbelieve his Providence. Attempts in themselves as absurd as they are impious, supported by no shew of Reason or Philosophy, but merely the effects of a criminal singularity, and a vain conceit of a superior understanding.

Let it be our care therefore to guard against every indulgence of this nature, and never to entertain any opinion that may be inconsistent with our own Reason, or that has the least tendency to reflect upon the Purity and Goodness of God. And as the design of our Creation, was to render to our Maker a reasonable service, and to qualify ourselves for an additional happiness in a future life, let us endeavor all that in us lies, to fulfil the gracious intention of our Creator, by "walking before Him in Righteousness and true Holiness," that, after this life ended, we may be partakers of everlasting

everlasting Glory, through the merits and mediation of our blessed Saviour and Redeemer; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be, as is most due, all Honour and Glory, Might, Majesty, and Dominion, both now, henceforth, and for evermore. *Amen.*



SERMON

everlasting Glory, through the merits and
mediation of our blessed Saviour and Re-
deemer, to whom with the Father and
the Holy Spirit, he as is most due, all
Honour and Glory, Might, Majesty, and
Dominion, both now, hereafter, and for
evermore. Amen.

And thus, my dear friends, I have
attempted to show you, that the
Gospel of Mark, is a Gospel of
the Kingdom of God, and of the
Necessity of Repentance, and of
Faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of
God.

And now, my dear friends, I leave
you to consider, and to meditate
upon, the words of our Lord, which
I have read to you, and which I
trust, will be a great blessing to
you, and will lead you to a
greater knowledge of the truth,
and to a greater love of God, and
of his Son, Jesus Christ, the
Saviour of the world.

And thus, my dear friends, I conclude
this sermon.

SERMON XIX.

JAMES I. 27.

*Pure religion and undefiled before
God and the Father is this, to
visit the fatherless and widows in
their affliction, and to keep himself
unspotted from the world.*

IN this chapter, and indeed in
every other throughout this E-
pistle, the Apostle observes to us
the many mistakes men were un-
der as to the true nature of Religion. Some
there were who placed it in the ear, and
thought they had sufficiently discharged their
duty by this particular part, hearing, with-
out ever practising what they had heard.
Some acquiesced in a formal and ceremoni-

ous

ous manner of devotion, and therefore did not receive what they asked, " because they " asked amiss." Some, who observed the shadowy and superficial parts of it, seemed to be very religious, but " could not bridle " their tongues," and therefore the Apostle assures them, " their Religion was vain." Others there were, who were partial to themselves, and despisers of the Poor, that had Faith and no Works, and yet all religious, every one " seeking out Death in the " error of his ways," and yet seeming to " press forward towards the mark for the " prize of the high calling of God in " CHRIST JESUS." To these, as to persons ready to be shipwrecked, the Apostle calls out to divert their course, and directs them to steer towards a different point, which would secure them from their recent danger, and conduct them to that port where all their fears and labors should have an end, and they themselves made happy to all eternity. " Pure religion and undefiled " before God and the Father is this, to " visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted " from the world."

In

In discoursing on these words I shall observe to you,

First, Some reasons why the author of this Epistle should select these two particular duties mentioned in the Text, as the whole of Religion, and to which he gives those distinguishing epithets of *pure and undefiled*. And then,

Secondly, I shall endeavor to shew the consistency of them with other definitions of the like nature in the sacred writings.

And *first* then, it is very reasonable to infer that the Apostle mentioned these Duties separately, and as the whole of Religion, because the persons he here remarks upon were all of them very negligent in the performance of them. Indeed he has a more immediate regard to the doctrines and practices of the Gnostic Heretics, who made use of Christianity no farther than as it was subservient to their temporal interests and conveniences. And it was in imitation of these, that others probably, who had been initiated into the Christian persuasion, be-

came so scandalously remiss in several essential points of their profession. Not one of the several classes or pretenders to Religion he here mentions, but what had wholly omitted the practical part of their duty. The pretended religious hearer, became a real wicked doer, and the corrupt heart of the ceremonious suppliant turned his own prayer into sin. The specious sanctity of others, was apparent in the liberty of their double tongue, which the Apostle in this Epistle stiles "a world of iniquity." And that of others, who attributed much to themselves upon the account of certain spiritual acquisitions, above those of their neighbours, was manifest in the violation of Charity, in being despisers of the Poor, and of having Faith without Works. They all of them seem to be acquainted with the means of their salvation, but none appear to have made a right application. He who was superlatively good in his own opinion in trifling affairs, had, like the Scribes and Pharisees in our Saviour's time, omitted the weightier matters of the Law, Judgment, Justice, and Mercy. He who aimed at being thought religious in some part of his behavior

behavior, forfeited that character in another, by being guilty of Calumny and Detraction. He who was conversant in prayer, did not succeed in his petitions, because his conscience was defiled. He who attended upon hearing the word of God, did not produce the suitable effects of it in his life and conversation. And therefore, in order to remove these depraved and wicked practices, the Apostle recommends two particular Duties which they had wholly neglected; and which he tells them were the *pure and undefiled* Religion, the main and important points of it, in contradistinction to those which they had believed, which were the mere circumstantial only.

But, *secondly*, Let us examine how the Apostle came to recommend these two particular Duties as the whole of Religion, when there are other very essential points, as necessary to be observed, as those which he mentions in the Text. Indeed to do good, which is here implied in "visiting the fatherless and widows;" and to abstain from evil, by keeping one's self "unspotted from the world," are two very excellent

and desirable dispositions. But if these waters of comfort, which were to refresh the widows and fatherless, proceeded from a polluted fountain; if the charitable man, who dealt out his bread to the hungry, and covered the naked with a garment, should have any other motive for his beneficence, than his tender concern for the Good of his fellow-creatures, and the hope of being rewarded in a future state; the exercise of this duty would be so far from deserving the appellation given to it by the Apostle, of *pure and undefiled*; that it would in reality degenerate into the very opposite extreme and merit the title of *evil*. For even the incense of Christians themselves stinks in the presence of Almighty God, when Vanity and Hypocrisy hold the censer; and our Charity and Alms shall become our condemnation, when Pride and Vainglory are the motives to them. Should not, therefore, the Apostle here have distinguished between a false and counterfeit Charity, and one that is grounded upon principles, which would sufficiently warrant the practice and performance of it. One might reasonably imagine, that when he mentioned a duty of so important

important a nature, he should withal have been particularly careful in pointing out the proper means whereby it was to be discharged. But upon examination it will appear that a distinction of this nature was not at all necessary.

The persons for whom the advice in the Text was intended, had all of them embraced the Christian Faith; they believed the Doctrines of Christianity, but did not live up to the rules of it; and therefore their Faith was the proper foundation whereon to erect all their good actions, and if they were guided and directed by that, would sufficiently instruct them in the proper performance of all their Christian Duties. They had no occasion for receiving any new information as to the Principles of Religion, they were now to go on to perfection, and add to their Faith, Virtue. But because they were so very backward in the execution of these particular Duties recommended in the Text, and because it was an approved maxim with the *Gnostics* of those times, to temporize with the powers of the world, and make their profession

truckle to all the inconveniences of life ; for this reason, probably, the Apostle mentions them separately by themselves, in opposition to the scandalous practices of those Heretics, who were so far from relieving those who suffered, or were under persecution for righteousness-sake, that they looked upon them as heterodox in their practice, and as submitting themselves to severities which Christianity did not in the least enjoin or require. But the violation of this duty was not the only thing the *Gnostics* were to be charged with, they not only omitted the exercise of this divine characteristic of the Christian Religion, of "visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction," but they likewise stood charged with abominable corruptions in their ordinary lives and conversations ; they did not keep themselves unspotted from the world.

Thus, lest these abatements in Religion, and other Impurities, which this sect admitted of, should influence the minds of the other Converts to the Christian Faith, the Apostle selects these two particular Duties mentioned in the Text, not only because the whole of their

their duty was comprised in the observance of them, but likewise because they would be secure from the corrupt and pernicious tenets of those Heretics, who were very defective in these fundamental points; and to whom St James is generally supposed to have had an immediate regard, when he declared that "Pure and undefiled religion, before God" and the Father, was to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to "keep one's self unspotted from the world."

Without doubt, the main scope of the Apostle, by this description, was to preserve the orthodox Christians from the infection of the *Gnostics*, and to convince them, however these pretenders flattered themselves upon the account of their speculative improvements, and their higher attainments in matters of Religion, that their Religion was really no Religion at all; that they devoted themselves to a mere shadow, became observers only of the ritual and ceremonious parts of religion, while the substantial and fundamental points thereof were quite neglected.

St James therefore does not give those, to

whom he wrote this Epistle, any instructions as to external behavior, or admonish them to imitate the specious purity of the *Gnostics*, but to be careful in the performance of these duties, which would itself sufficiently distinguish them from those Heretics, and prove the strongest barrier to all their attacks and insinuations. For when men come to oppose one another in Religion, and act by a different principle both as to Faith and Practice, it will be no easy undertaking to reconcile opinions so widely contradictory, or bring them to conform to one and the same standard. This, to be sure, was the principal reason why the Apostle presses these duties of Charity, and Abstinence from evil, which is implied in keeping themselves unspotted from the world, as being the surest and best defensives against the specious and corrupt practices of the *Gnostic* Heretics.

A third reason, and the last that I shall mention, why the author of this Epistle should select these two particular duties as the whole of Religion, and to which he gives these distinguishing epithets of *pure and undefiled*, might be because of their universal

verfal influence upon all our actions, throughout the whole course of our Christian warfare.

The whole of a Christian's duty is comprised by our blessed Saviour, and drawn into the due observation of two Precepts, the Love of God, and the Love of our neighbor. But before we can be qualified for the proper discharge of either of these, we must acquaint ourselves with all the previous means necessary to be observed to this end.—We must be careful in observing the negative as well as positive parts of our duty. We must not only visit the fatherless and widow, but keep ourselves unspotted from the world. That is, throughout the whole intercourse of life, we must guard against temptation; watch over the frailties and infirmities of flesh and blood, and abstain from all appearance of evil. Without these excellent dispositions, that first and great Commandment, (which, in order to its being duly observed, requires the utmost strength and energy of affection) would be but very lamely and imperfectly executed. And this deficiency in our duty to God, will prevent

prevent the proper discharge of that which we owe to our neighbor. If our obedience to him be partial and insincere, our love to our Brethren can never be truly tender and affectionate. For whatever we do of this nature, in order to its being performed as it ought, must be done by the direction of our supreme Lawgiver. And no one can possibly be supposed to act in this manner, that has not at the same time a strict regard and veneration for the person who has given him this direction or rule to walk by.

In all our actions, at least in those that are performed upon a religious account, we must propose some laudable and good end. And the man that sets God always before him, and makes his prescription the rule and measure of his actions, in whatever he does, proposes for his end the Glory of his Maker. Whenever he is conversant in acts of this nature he must be careful to observe every circumstance whereby he may perform them as he ought, and render them acceptable and well-pleasing to God. His Mouth and his Heart are always the same, and whilst his Hand is employed in dispensing the pledge,

his

his Heart is solicitous for the due object. Thus this heavenly frame of mind diffuses itself throughout all the actions of his life, and whenever he is tempted to return an injury, though under the extremest provocation, this divine influence interposes, brings him to recollect who he is, and what he is about, and prevents the evil which would otherwise ensue. Thus instead of being immediately hurried into sin, upon any sudden or unexpected temptation, (which would inevitably follow where a man has not this Virtue to have recourse to) he improves every trial of this nature to his own advantage, makes all the unfortunate events of life subservient to his Duty, and the proper end for which they were appointed, the Glory of God. Nay, so great is the influence of this Virtue over all our civil and religious actions that, if we believe *St Paul*, a man cannot possibly err from his duty that is so happy as to be under its guidance and direction. For he says, "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; "envieth not; vaunteth not itself, is not "puffed up, doth not behave itself unseem- "ly, seeketh not her own, is not easily pro- "voked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in "iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; bear- "eth

"eth all things, believeth all things, hopeth
"all things, endureth all things."

Thus we see the extensive influence of Charity over all our actions, and the absolute necessity there is for the due observance of this Virtue in all affairs of life. That all our other good qualities, unattended with this, will avail us nothing. That a due application of this only will cover the multitude of sins, that is, excuse us as to many other imperfections which flesh and blood must naturally be heirs to. Thus it is apparent why the author of this Epistle should select these *two* particular Duties as the whole of Religion, and to which he gives those distinguishing epithets of *pure and undefiled*, because of their universal influence upon all our actions throughout the whole course of our christian warfare.

I shall now proceed to shew, in the *second* place, The consistency of them with other distinctions of the like nature in the sacred writings.

When the young man in the Gospel asked what he "must do to inherit eternal life?" Our blessed Saviour does not indeed content himself with the mention of one or two particular duties, as comprehensive of the rest ;

rest; but does in effect repeat to him all the Commandments of the Decalogue. But if we consider the nature of them, and the necessary qualifications by which they are to be performed, it will appear very necessary that they should have been particularly specified? The person who asks this question seems desirous only of being acquainted with the particulars of his duty, without ever inquiring into the proper means of their performance. For we find, after our Saviour had enumerated the conditions upon which his question depended, he could not help exulting to think how very punctually he had fulfilled them: "All these things have I kept from my youth up." And therefore our blessed Saviour, in order to prove how well he had acquitted himself as to these Duties heretofore, and how he stood at present as to the point in hand, tells him that he was still defective in one thing; but if he would submit to the performance of *that*, which was, "to sell all that he had, and give to the Poor, then he should have treasure in Heaven." Upon which "he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions." Thus, by his refusal to comply with this demand, he gave the strongest evidence that was possible that he did not pursue eternal life with that sincerity

cerity of affection that he ought; and that all his other religious observances, all his other good qualities, which he pretended he was master of, had been of no real service to him, because he wanted the chief thing which was to recommend them all; a beneficent and charitable disposition.

And indeed it is this that must season the whole frame and body of Religion, and make every thing that we do upon that account acceptable to God. For otherwise, how great soever our zeal may be in affairs of this nature, though we bestow all our goods to feed the poor, and give our bodies to be burned, and have not Charity, it will signify nothing. Nay, such is the excellence and import of this particular Duty, that it is made the test of that affection and obedience which we owe to our Maker, "For if we love not our Brother, whom we have seen, how shall we love God whom we have not seen." It is therefore made the perfection of a Christian to be charitable. And the whole of our duty to God and our Neighbour is, that "He who loveth God, love his Brother also."

Either of these separately observed, that is, if one of them is performed, and the other omitted, is in reality doing nothing at all. For the person who pretends to have a zeal and affection for his Maker, cannot manifest it any otherwise than by keeping his Commandments. And his Commandments cannot be kept, without observing them in the proper sense and meaning of their Author, and that in so full and comprehensive a manner, as not to harbor the least grain of impurity in the person who observes them. This can no way so effectually be guarded against, as by the acquisition of this particular Virtue. For this, as the Apostle observes, will secure us from temptation, and prevent the commission of what we are forbid; we shall not commit Adultery; we shall not kill; we shall not steal; we shall not bear false witness; we shall not covet; and if there be any other Commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Thus if we examine into that description of the Prophet *Micah*, where the whole of our Duty is comprised under three particulars,

lars, ~~do~~ doing Justice—loving Mercy—and
 “walking humbly with our God;” we shall
 find, that to the proper execution of these
 Duties, those mentioned by the Apostle in
 the Text are absolutely and essentially re-
 quisite.

For no man, in a religious sense, can be
 said to do Justice who only observes the ne-
 gative part of this precept; which consists
 in doing no injury, nor in defrauding or
 overreaching his neighbor. He must like-
 wise extend his mind to practice, and put in
 execution all the several branches which arise
 from the positive part of it. Besides the
 observation of commutative Justice in se-
 cular life, (which may be sufficient to gain
 him the character of an honest man) he
 must add, as a Christian and good Soldier
 of JESUS CHRIST, the good effects of a cha-
 ritable and beneficent disposition; he must
 “disperse abroad, and give to the Poor,”
 otherwise his righteousness will expire with
 him, and his horn will not be exalted with
 honour.

Thus likewise no man can be said to be
 truly

truly tender and compassionate, and a lover of Mercy, who does not make it the ruling principle of all his actions. Whoso seeth his Brother have need, and in words only pities his distress, but in deeds shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, cannot be said to love mercy.

So likewise to walk humbly with our God, we must not only put on the appearance of Humility in our external behavior, or seem to submit or acquiesce under providential dispensations, but we are also to be directed by its influence throughout the whole intercourse of our lives. "We must not mind high things, but condescend to men of low estate." In lowliness of mind each must esteem other better than himself.

These are the necessary qualifications for the performance of this Duty, without which we shall not be able to find rest to our Souls. So that we see there is a kind of Love and Charity requisite to the discharge of all the offices of a social, religious,

gious, and christian life. It is for this reason the Apostle, in one of his Epistles, presses the observation of this Duty in whatever we are engaged in; "Let all your things be done with Charity." Thus likewise it is that Charity is called by the same Apostle, in his Epistle to *Timothy*, "the end" of the Commandment; and in that to the *Romans*, "the fulfilling of the Law."

Since therefore the practice of this Duty is so often, and so forcibly recommended to our imitation; since we are encouraged to the performance of it from the pleasing reflection of being Benefactors to our Brethren in distress, and have the promise of our blessed Saviour, that the most minute act of Charity, done in his Name, shall not go unrewarded at the last and great day of Retribution: Let us, in the words of our most excellent Church, "beseech
"Almighty God, who hath taught us that
"all our doings without Charity are no-
"thing worth; that He would send down
"his holy Spirit, and pour into our
"hearts that most excellent gift of Cha-
"rity,

" rity, the very bond of peace, and of all
" Virtues ; without which whosoever liv-
" eth is counted dead before thee. Grant
" this, O merciful Father, for JESUS
" CHRIST'S sake, our only Saviour and
" Redeemer. *Amen.*



OUR LAMBS

Give the very bond of peace and of all
" Virtues; without which whoe'er liv-
" eth is counted dead before thee. Grant
" that O merciful Father, for Jesus
" Christ's sake our only Saviour and

" Redeemer, Amen.

SERMON XX.

M A T T. xxvii. 46.

*My God, my God, why hast thou
forsaken me ?*

WHOEVER considers the historical account of our Saviour's Life, with respect to his Sufferings here on earth, must confess, that no one circumstance of it doth so sensibly convey to us the extraordinary Grief and Resentment he was under, as the passionate expressions in the Text, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?" And though he had been assaulted by the powers of darkness, and scarce any temptation that was common to man had escaped him, yet neither the Affronts and Indignities of the *one*, nor the superior Art nor Malice of the *other*, were

ever able to discourage him in the prosecution of the great work God had given him to do. Though he was so cruelly used by his own Disciples, those in whom he put the greatest confidence, as to be denied by *one*, betrayed by *another*, and, at a time when he stood most in need of their assistance, deserted by them *all*; yet *these*, though by us they would be looked upon as instances of the highest Treachery and Ingratitude, he seems to take little or no notice of; however, he was far from making them matter of complaint. His divine Foresight and Providence had warned him of these events; and though he might have no perfect foretaste of his own Sufferings, yet he could not be without a clear and lively idea of them.

As to the austerities of his life, which consisted in prayer and fasting, this was made easy and comfortable to him by the immediate presence and communication of God. When he withdrew himself from the ignorance and perverseness of men, he was sure to enjoy the delightful converse of his heavenly Father. So that whatever uneasi-

ness

ness and dissatisfaction the former might occasion him in the work of his Ministry, yet this was abundantly recompensed by the divine intercourse of the Spirit of God, which was more than sufficient, were his troubles and afflictions ever so great, to comfort and refresh his soul. But when this divine comfort and assistance were withdrawn, when Body and Soul were to separate and divide; when he stood in the greatest need of support; when "the pains of Hell gat hold upon him, and the snares of Death overtook him," how passionately does he bewail the loss of so faithful a Friend? How pathetically does he complain of, and expostulate with his Father, for deserting him in this needful time of trouble? "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

In speaking to these words, I shall inquire,

First, What this desertion was.

Secondly, Why it was permitted. And,

Thirdly, How we are to apply it.

And ~~now~~ then, what this desertion was. In order to this inquiry, it will be requisite to go back a little, and consider what our Saviour himself says with relation to his sufferings. We read in the third chapter of St John, verse 35, he tells the Jews, that "the Father loved the Son, and had given all things into his hand." And in the same Gospel we are informed, that the true ground and foundation of this Love, was, because "he laid down his Life to take it again." And in the same chapter he adds, "No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself; I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." Now these declarations of Scripture are so very expressive of the nature of Christ's office, and the power wherewith he was invested, that there can be no room to doubt (without having recourse to his Miracles) of his Divine extract and original.

And therefore allowing a Divine and Human Nature to subsist inseparable in the person of CHRIST, "God of the substance
 of

" of his Father, begotten before the world,
 " and Man of the substance of his Mother,
 " born in the world;" how can we possibly
 account for a desertion of either? For the
 union of the Father with the Son must
 eternally remain; and however they may be
 distinguished by terms of appellation, yet as
 to their Nature and Essence they are indivi-
 sible. " when he said, 'I will not leave thee; I will
 be with thee, and give up the ghost as thou
 shalt say, 'Thou art not alone, I am with thee.' "

How shall we therefore account for the
 desertion our Saviour so much complains of
 in the Text? Since the union of the two
 Natures was such, as not to admit of the
 least separation. His Divinity, we may be
 sure, was still as much with him on the
 cross, as it had been before in the course of
 his ministry. That we know was not only
 impassible in itself, but very much contri-
 buted to alleviate the hardships and inconve-
 niences he was subject to in his human Na-
 ture. And therefore the absence of this
 Divine Comforter, when CHRIST was in
 the height of his agonies, was the more
 sensibly experienced, and consequently the
 more affectionately lamented.

But

But still how could he stand in need of what he certainly enjoyed? He was as much God on the cross as he was at his Incarnation; as much "the brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person," as he was at his Inauguration. Nay, he was as much "his beloved Son, in whom his soul was well-pleased," by that last act of his obedience, "when he bowed his head, and gave up the Ghost," as he was at his glorious Transfiguration.

The two Natures therefore of our blessed Saviour were not dissolved by death; the divine and human Soul still subsisted in the same union; the whole conflict lay in the separation of them from the Body. The divine Nature, as I before observed, was incapable of suffering, and therefore could not be supposed to share in it. And the substance of CHRIST's complaint in the Text was, that now the terrors of Death were upon him, his Divinity had ceased to exert itself in his favour, and given him up to the will of his enemies. This he seems to be very sensible of when he was first apprehended. "This, says he, is your hour,

" and

"and the power of darkness." The time was now coming "when he was to see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied;" and though this might be so terrifying a circumstance, as to induce him to intreat his heavenly Father to save him from this hour, yet he presently recollects himself, and subjoins, "But for this cause came I unto this hour." This is the only instance of irresolution that appears in our blessed Saviour; and I think we may very properly date the suspension of his divine Power from the time of his being seized in the Garden of *Gethsemane*. From which, to the time of his Death, there does not appear to have happened any thing supernatural in his favor. He is permitted to undergo the most shameful indignities; to be set up as a mark of Obloquy and Contempt; to be condemned to an ignominious Death; to be reviled at, and to expire on the cross, without the least visible mark of the Divine displeasure. But the work he was engaged in required it; he was to make himself "an offering for sin;" and, we are told, "the Lord laid upon him the iniquity of us all." And therefore when this time of affliction

affliction drew near, it must be no small aggravation to his other sorrows, that God had suspended the gracious effects of his power, at a time he stood most in need of their comfort and assistance: and this is what I take to be intended by the complaint in the Text, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

I shall proceed therefore in the *second* place, to shew why this was permitted.

Now this could not be upon the account of any personal sin or impurity in our blessed Saviour, because we are assured, "He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." And though the Jews accused him, and Pilate condemned him as a malefactor, yet this was a charge absolutely void of proof, and without any other foundation than that of the meanness of his appearance. They would have been very willing to have granted him the title of a Prophet, and allowed his Miracles to have been sufficient testimonies of a Divine Mission, if he had not assumed another character, and taken upon him the office of the Messiah. But his having done this with
circumstances

circumstances so directly contrary to their expectation, occasioned so general a disgust, that they not only opposed his doctrine, though explanatory of their own, but made frequent attempts upon his person, though perfectly inoffensive; and attributed the very evidences of his Messiahship to the Prince of darkness. Neither were they satisfied with these abuses, till they had wrecked their vengeance on the object of their resentment, and imbrued their hands in his innocent blood.

This short account of the proceedings of the Jews with regard to our blessed Saviour, will furnish us with matter sufficient to discover the true reasons of CHRIST'S Sufferings and Death: And the motive which induced them to persecute him, "because he" "made himself the Messiah," will prove the necessity there was for his submitting, under that character, to this severe dispensation.

To this purpose we are not to consider so much our Redeemer's Life and Doctrine, as the character he appeared in, and the office he came to execute. For if we should con-

fine

fine ourselves wholly to the consideration of the *former*, without a due regard had to the *latter*, we shall quite mistake the intention of Providence, and the gracious design of our Saviour's coming into the world. If we should only look upon him as an innocent person, or an Instructor of Righteousness, we shall not be able to discover either the Goodness or Wisdom of God in afflicting him. But if we consider him with respect to his Messiahship, as a person sent from God, as one who had undertaken to make satisfaction for our past offences, and restore us to the love and favor of Heaven; then indeed his being "smitten of God and afflicted," will appear altogether consistent with the design of his Mission, and perfectly agreeable to the several descriptions we meet with in Scripture of the sufferings of the Messiah.

In this light, if we consider the great import of the work he came to execute, together with his own voluntary stipulation for the performance of it; we must, at the same time we confess the Justice and Severity of God towards his Son; acknowledge his
great

great Goodness and Mercy towards us. All that was to befall him before his passion, he foreknew, and discovered to his Disciples; neither did he suffer before he had communicated that system of Righteousness which was to make the work of our Redemption the more effectual. For as the most perfect Law then in being was unable, without a farther Revelation, to qualify men to partake of those means of Grace which were to be the happy consequences of our Redeemer's victory over Death; it was thought requisite by infinite Wisdom, that the world should not be left destitute of suitable Instructions how to obtain them. And therefore, when our blessed Saviour had finished this part of his Mission, and settled some other Institutions for the future observation of his Church, there seemed to be nothing now wanting to complete his Messiahship, but the great Atonement and Expiation. The former he had procured by the immediate power and assistance of his Divine Nature, the latter he was to undergo in consequence of the Desertion of this Assistance, and in obedience to the will of his Heavenly Father,

Indeed

I Indeed the Promulgation of a new Law, though ever so perfect and complete in its own nature, would have been to no purpose without an atonement for former corruptions. And the Life, Doctrine and Miracles of CHRIST would have been utterly insufficient, without such an expiation. For though he had no sin of his own to expiate, though his behavior and conduct were such as to make him esteemed of God and Man, yet the circumstance of his having taken upon him the great office of Reconciliation must subject him, to all the inconveniences which the terms and conditions of such an undertaking could possibly inflict. For besides the importance of the Blessing which would accrue to mankind by this Resignation, it was so unlimited and extensive, that not only the Sons and Daughters of *Adam*, then in Being, but all past and future generations, whom the LORD our God had before, or should hereafter call, were to partake of it.

So that we may very reasonably infer that the previous stipulations to so general a Blessing must be exactly and punctually performed, before that Blessing could take place.

place: What they were I believe there are few so ignorant as to need an information. But it may be worth observing, how minutely *all* the several predictions which related to the mean and afflicted state of the Messiah, were fulfilled in the person of our blessed Saviour, and how his behavior, actions and expressions, concurred to put it beyond all doubt that he was the CHRIST, the Saviour of the world. That he died, not upon the account of any impurity in his own nature, but for the love of us; that it was not only impossible that the sacrifices of the legal Covenant could effectuate this design, but likewise, that it was beyond the power of any other created Being, because no finite Being, once dead, could have concurred to his own Resurrection; without which, the grand characteristic of the Divinity, and the most irrefragable testimony of the Messiahship, would have been wanting. For as our blessed Saviour had often acquainted his Disciples with his sufferings, so he had likewise assured them, "that after three days he would rise again." Which latter was as evident an instance of his divine, as the former was of his human nature.

ture. So that as the offended Deity could not be appeased by any other Atonement, it was highly requisite, that the person who had engaged to render it effectual, should submit to all the severities, to which the office of a Mediator and Surety did expose him. How else should the extreme malediction of the Law, and the general condemnation to which we were consigned by the sin of *Adam*, be taken away and rendered ineffectual? Or indeed, how would the blessings of the Gospel Covenant, which we now enjoy, have ever taken place, if the proper Atonement for former transgressions had never been made?

As therefore God was pleased to accept of this commutation for the sins of the world, and to readmit men into his favor through the merits and satisfaction of his Son, it is highly necessary to believe before the grant of the *one*, there must be a due performance of the *other*.

For this, and many other reasons, ^{it} behoved CHRIST to suffer; and though the particular method taken for our Redemption,

demption, was agreeable to, and confirmed
 by divine Wisdom, yet it hath been objected
 to as inconsistent with the Justice and Purity
 of the supreme Being, that the sinner should
 live, and the innocent blood be shed. But
 if it be inconsistent with the Justice of God
 to accept of the Death of the Innocent for
 the sin of the Guilty, is it not likewise
 highly contradictory of his Veracity, to
 promise a Redeemer as early as the Fall;
 and that his Providence should be concerned,
 that this Promise should be transmitted to
 future generations, together with the parti-
 cular marks and circumstances, and time of
 his Appearance, if this had never happened?
 Or admit he was to have come into the
 world without these previous notices, which
 we find are no help to any one who denies
 a divine Revelation. Admit, I say, he was
 to appear vested with the same Authority,
 and bring with him the same Credentials,
 which we are assured our Saviour did, how
 could such a one refuse his belief of his be-
 ing a person come from God? or how could
 he imagine that any one could perform such
 Miracles unless God was with him? As to
 the penal and satisfactory act of our Re-

demption, God hath never left us without proper and sufficient intimations, and not only the punishment, but the person who was to suffer it, is as expressly foretold. And therefore, when the fulness of time came when these great events were to take place, where is the room to doubt of the truth of them, after they were so punctually fulfilled? As to objecting the purity and innocence of the Oblation, that may serve as a reason for God's gracious acceptance of it, as well as an argument of its "being able to perfect" "for ever them that are sanctified."

Thus it is we come to know why "such" "an high Priest became us, who was holy," "harmless, and separate from sinners." And for this cause, as the same Apostle tells us, "he was the Mediator of the new Covenant," "that by means of Death, for the redemption of transgressions, that were under the" "first Testament, they which were called," "might receive the promise of an eternal" "Inheritance."

Thus we are at once informed both of the *reason* and *necessity* of CHRIST'S Sufferings

ings and Death. The reason of them, because no other sacrifice could have been so effectual in procuring our reconciliation with God. And the necessity of them, because as the divine Vengeance was suspended upon the Intercession of the Messiah, so no other Atonement, but that of the Son of God, could have completed our promised Redemption; could have procured for us the blessings of the Gospel-Covenant, or have delivered us from future condemnation. So that these, with other reasons, make it apparent why CHRIST assumed our nature, and suffered in our stead: and why the supreme Being permitted and accepted of "his one Oblation of himself, once offered for the sins of the whole world".

I shall now proceed, in the *third* and last place, To apply what has been said.

In order to make the sacrifice of our Redeemer have its due influence upon our lives and conversations, we should often meditate upon the gracious design of his coming into the world; which, as St Paul assures us, "was to save sinners." And though some

may think, that the sin of *Adam*, which infected all his descendents, could not be of a very heinous nature, because God was graciously pleased to suspend the punishment of it, and to bear with the repeated corruptions of a wicked world, upon the bare Intercession of a single person; yet, this is so far from being an argument of the smallness, that it proves a real aggravation of the offence; and shews that it was of such a magnitude, that it was out of the power of the sinner to atone for it. And therefore, though God was pleased to accept of his Son's expiation, we are not to impute that to any merit of ours, but to his own infinite mercy. And we should be so far from thinking this an absolute discharge from, that we should look upon it as a farther obligation to a future obedience. For "though God sent not his Son into the
" world to destroy the world, but that the
" world through him might be saved;" yet this gracious dispensation was not so uncovenanted, or unconditional, as to qualify men to partake of the benefits of it, without having fulfilled the conditions upon which

which they depended. It is true, by virtue of this Atonement, we were put into a capacity of pardon and reconciliation; and through the Merits of CHRIST, we have freer access to the Throne of Grace; nay, should we hereafter relapse into guilt, such is the gracious effect of this expiation, that we have an Advocate with the Father, who, upon our sincere Repentance and Humiliation, will intercede for our pardon and forgiveness. But still these advantages do not descend to us as the sinful posterity of *Adam*, but as heirs of the Covenant of Mercy, as adopted sons of God, and members of CHRIST's mystical body. And, as without these previous qualifications, no one can be capable of those means of Grace which are offered to us in the Gospel-Covenant, so without a due use of them, and a strict conformity to the Christian Institution, we can never flatter ourselves with the Hope of Glory. Nay, in reality, all that our blessed Saviour hath already done for us, without this, will be a farther aggravation of our guilt, for our neglecting to finish so great salvation.

Let us, therefore, not frustrate this Grace of God, but whenever we reflect upon the sufferings of our Redeemer, let them excite in us the same zeal and readiness to discharge the several Duties of the Christian Institution, as he hath shewed, "to do thy will, O God." To this end, let *his* Prayers, Watchings, and Fastings, induce us to set apart particular seasons for the same holy and religious exercises and retirements; let those Virtues wherein *he* was the most conversant, and in the discharge of which *he* seemed to take the greatest delight, engage *our* particular regard and imitation, and as *he* suffered to "purchase to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works;" let us be careful that this gracious intention be duly effectuated, by an unfeigned and steadfast obedience to what he hath commanded, and by carefully avoiding what he hath forbid. To such a behavior, and to such of his saints as *these* "will the Sun of Righteousness appear with healing in his wings;" and will address himself to them in that tender and blessed Invitation, when he stands at the latter day upon the earth, "Come, ye blessed

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"ed children of my Father, inherit the
 " kingdom prepared for you from the be-
 " ginning of the world." Which blessed
 sentence, that we may all receive in that
 awful day, may God of his infinite mercy
 grant, for the sake of JESUS CHRIST our Re-
 deemer. *Amen.*



and children of my Father; inherit the
kingdom prepared for you from the be-
ginning of the world. Which, blessed
fountain, that we may all receive in that
twofold day, may God of his infinite mercy
grant for the sake of Jesus Christ our Re-
deemer. Amen.

S E R M O N XXI.

ACTS x. 38.

Who went about doing good.

¶ S. Goodness is one of the most
¶ A amiable Attributes of the supreme
¶ Being, and the most apt to beget
¶ esteem and veneration in the hearts
of those who feel its gracious and benign
influences; so there cannot be a greater and
more excellent attainment, than to have a
mind constantly employed in the imitation
of Him, whose Goodness is diffused through-
out the visible creation, and whose Mercy
is over all his works. For as the most ac-
ceptable oblation to God is a contrite and
humble Spirit; so, amongst men, an offer-
ing of the sweetest and most grateful smell,
is a liberal and beneficent disposition. It is
a me-

a memorial of so lasting and durable a nature as perpetuates a man's character to the latest ages; and covers all his other blemishes and failings: agreeable to what the Psalmist observes, "He hath dispersed abroad, he hath given to the Poor, therefore his Righteousness remaineth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honor." Thus likewise we are informed in the Text, that it was one of the principal parts of our Saviour's character (who was all Perfection) that while he was on earth, "He went about doing good." He taught us in his human nature, by this particular behavior, how one of the greatest essentials of the Christian Religion was to be performed, and how we were severally obliged, if we would be esteemed Children of our Father which is in Heaven, to be subservient to each other in all wants and distresses, and to be kind to the unthankful and to the evil. And whosoever falls short of this character, that "listens not to the Poor when he crieth, to the fatherless, and him that hath no helper; that seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him;" and yet vainly presumes to account himself

himself a true Servant and Disciple of CHRIST, is mistaken in his notions of himself, and quite frustrates the gracious ends and designs of his Redeemer. For as "he came not" to call the righteous but sinners to repentance; so that Repentance was to be expressed, not only by ceasing to do Evil, which is negative Goodness, but also by learning to do well; that is, by performing positive Duties, and persevering in them to their lives end. For thus much St. Paul tells us in his Epistle to Titus, "CHRIST gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." And in order to make this design of his the more effectual, we are told in the Text, that he set us a very lively example of this in his own person, and that while he was on earth, "He went about doing Good."

By *doing Good*, we are here to understand in general, the exercise of Goodness, whether in acts of Justice, Piety, or Charity. And by *going about*, that this Duty of doing Good is not confined or circumscribed to any

any Time or Place, but that we are severally obliged to exercise it (if other circumstances will admit) at all Times, in all Places, and upon all Occasions. So that in speaking to these words, I shall observe to you,

First, That the actual exercise of Goodness is our absolute and indispensable Duty; and,

Secondly, That we are to express our conformity to it in the most extensive sense and meaning of the words, *who went about*.

And *first* then, That the actual exercise of Goodness is our absolute and indispensable Duty.

Whoever hath made himself acquainted with that beauty and harmony which appear in the lowest order of created Beings, cannot help discerning how agreeably the inanimate world exerts itself in the various operations assigned it by infinite Wisdom; whilst man, who is the glory of the visible Creation, and to whom all other Beings act in a

state of subordination, by his Negligence and Irregularity seems to be intirely unacquainted with the part he is to act in this universal scene; and perhaps is the only Being that runs counter to the will of his Maker.

Even these several species of the vegetable creation, which, in the eye and understanding of a rational creature, appear to be the most insignificant, by their united diligence in observing the designs of Providence, do convey to man a silent reprimand for quenching the light of Nature; for perverting the use of his reason, and neglecting to finish the great work of his salvation. Can any one behold those Heavens, where the Glory of God doth so conspicuously appear, and that Firmament, that doth so apparently shew his handy work, in the formation of those celestial bodies, the Sun, Moon, and Stars; can he observe their regular courses and revolutions, how they help to crown the year with their Maker's Goodness, and cause the clouds to drop fatness, without being convinced of the unspeakable Goodness of Him, who was pleased to allot such an

an infinite variety of Beings to the use of man? and to furnish this lower world with all possible requisites for his subsistence, purely that he may offer unto God Thanks giving; that he, like his Maker, may learn to pour forth the riches of his Goodness, and, from a sense of his own vileness and dependence, be moved to make a proper distribution of the Gifts of Providence, by relieving those who are in real want, by allotting a superfluous part of his substance, to such uses as his own prudence shall direct, and to take all opportunities of promoting the Glory of God, by advancing the welfare and happiness of his fellow-creatures.

Thus likewise, if we look abroad into the animal world, we shall find every species of Beings regularly pursuing the good and proper end of their creation. Nay, we are even told, to the great shame and scandal of human nature, that "the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib;" that these pay a sort of natural regard and grateful acknowledgment, for their sustenance, to their keepers; while some of us, who daily partake of the Blessings of Heaven and Earth,

Earth, and live and thrive upon God's all-sufficiency, are wholly wanting in these respects.

Persons who seem to imagine that they are made only to be provided for, "that all
" sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the
" field, the fowls of the air, and whatsoever
" walketh through the paths of the waters,"
are made subservient to their use; and that
nothing is to be expected in lieu of such a
gracious Provision; and because the great
and good God hath thus put all things in
this sublunary world under them, they seem
to have grown giddy with their dominion,
and to have quite forgot that they have one
Superior, who did put all things under
" them." But can any thing so directly
contradict the true interest and happiness of
rational Beings, or shew men so destitute of
common sense, or so lost and abandoned to
human prudence, as to remain thus careless
of the issues of eternity; while the brutal
and inanimate world are all active, and im-
ployed in pursuing the order of Providence,
and fulfilling the design of their creation?

But lest these general notices should not have their due force and influence upon our lives and conversations, we have the written Word of God to direct and animate us to our Duty; and it is very observable, that it was to this gracious end and purpose, that those peculiar doctrines of the Gospel took place, where other Institutions ended. When human reason was at a loss, and began to sink under the heavy weight of an adverse fortune, there was nothing in those darker ages of the world to which mankind could have recourse in order to their succour and support. The sense of a future Retribution, or the assurance of the soul's Immortality, did not exert itself so far as to influence them unto a proper behavior under all the various vicissitudes of human affairs. Patience was no virtue in irremediable Affliction; Content had not its proper efficacy in mean circumstances; nor Temperance, or a due restraint upon the Passions, its proper influence and esteem in a well furnished condition. The world, at that time, walked by sight, and not by faith; and though there were some among them whose Learning and Philosophy assisted them to see through

through these abuses; and put them upon rectifying the mistakes of their Brethren, yet neither the doctrines they taught, nor the life they led in conformity to those doctrines, could ever induce the rest of mankind to submit to them. They could not be brought to part with a sensual and luxurious life, because of some small inconveniences attending them, for the sake of living in a course of speculation, and enjoying all the advantages of Temperance and Sobriety, Prosperity, or a state of Affluence, they esteemed the greatest blessing that could happen, and the proper application of it was to indulge their sensual lusts and passions. They conceived it no crime thus to bestow it; neither were they, in their own minds, apprehensive of being brought to account for it. This was the state of the Heathen world, before "Life and Immortality was brought to light by the Gospel." But "when this day-spring from on High visited us," we were taught to flee from the wrath to come, that is, from a future condemnation in another life, by quite altering our former practices, by repenting of the sins committed by us in our unregenerate state; and "by bring-

"ing forth fruits meet for Repentance" in this time of probation. And to excite us to this conversion, we are there taught to expect a life of future bliss, "a crown of Glory which fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us."

There it is likewise we are informed, in fundry instances, of the great necessity of doing Good; and how dangerous a thing it is either to offend against or postpone it. To the first of these (without a sincere repentance) is denounced that irreversible sentence, "Go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels;" and to the other may be applied the fate of the fruitless tree, for though "God is gracious and merciful, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance," yet his long-suffering will have a period; and after certain trials and forbearances to no purpose, we shall be "hewn down and cast into the fire." This was the case of that servant, who neglected to improve what his Lord had committed to his trust. And though he was not accused of having wasted it in riotous living,

or

on of applying it to any ill purpose or design, yet because he had not done any Good, because he had not improved it, and made a proportionable advantage with his fellow-servants, upon this very omission and neglect did his condemnation turn: "Cast ye
" the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing
" of teeth."

But we have not only the necessity of this great Duty of doing Good, clearly represented to us in Scripture, and enforced by the practice of our blessed Saviour, but we find it enlarged in several instances, and exceeding what was ever before practised in the world. For we are not only commanded to "love them that love us, but to love our
" enemies, and to be kind unto the un-
" thankful, and to the evil." We are not only to abstain from injurious treatment upon the highest provocation, but we are enjoined upon every occasion to practise all the good offices of humanity and Christian charity. Whoever falls short of this perfection, forfeits the title of CHRIST's true Disciple, and utterly disqualifies him-

self from sharing in those rewards which he hath annexed to the keeping of his Commandments. Thus much may suffice to shew that the exercise of Goodness is our absolute and indispensable Duty.

I shall now proceed, in the *second* place, To observe to you, That we are to express our conformity to this Duty of doing Good, in the most extensive sense and meaning of the words, "who went about."

It were needless to mention the extensive effects of Goodness to those who are governed by the dictates of Virtue and Humanity; or what an apparent influence a beneficent disposition has upon all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions. Those who have copied after that perfect Pattern of all Righteousness, JESUS CHRIST, cannot but be sensible with what force and energy such an imitation exerts itself to make us like Him, who is Truth in the abstract, and to "be perfect, as our Heavenly Father is perfect." The pleasing reflection which attends every act of Goodness, excites our zeal, and animates us to perseverance: And when, after re-

peated

peated instances of this kind, we have got the better of the mean selfish and contracted views that lurk within us, we insensibly grow in Grace, and come to be established, strengthened, and settled in all Virtue.

To attain to this great excellence, it will be requisite at our first setting out to lay aside every vain thought that may beset us in so glorious a pursuit; to remove from us every evil and corrupt prepossession, and to change all our temporal into spiritual expectations. To beg of God, that no other inclinations but such as tend to promote his Glory, and the Good of our fellow creatures, may dwell within us; that no other motive but that of the Love of Him, and our future happiness, may mix with our designs, and temper our zeal in *going about* to do Good. This, I say, must be previous to our Beneficence; we are first to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, and then to proceed upon such principles, whereby he has assured us that all our good actions shall be accepted. And when we have gone thus far, we can never be so seek for proper examples to excite us to the due performance of this Duty.

The holy Scriptures have furnished us with such a variety of pious, holy, and good men; and have withal assured us, since their departure out of this life, of their exceeding great Reward in another, that nothing but wilful blindness on the one side, and foolish perverseness on the other, can hinder us from acquitting ourselves as we ought in this state of trial and probation, and of dwelling with "the spirits of just men made perfect," when we go hence, and be no more seen. But, to go no farther backward than to the Historical Account of Him "who brought " life and immortality to light by the Gospel," we shall find, that the whole tenor of his Life and Actions were perfectly agreeable to the design of his Mission, and that whilst he was on earth, " he went about," as *St Peter* tells us, " doing Good." If we trace Him from his first appearance upon the public stage of life, to the time of his ascending into Heaven, we shall not be able to remark any one action unattended with some degree of Goodness, or any one expression that was not capable of conveying Grace to those who heard it. Even his private Watchings, Prayers, and Fastings,

were

were not without their proper influences and effects, and must for ever be acknowledged, as lively admonitions to us, "upon whom" the ends of the world are come, "to set apart particular seasons for the same holy and religious retirements. He even exerted his Omnipotence in doing Good, and would not suffer any consideration to supersede or suspend his good-will towards men. If we may believe *St John*, no very considerable part or interval of his Life could pass, without some gracious effect of his Goodness and Power. For he assures us in the close of his Gospel, that besides that catalogue of Miracles recorded by him and the other Evangelists, there were "many other things which Jesus" did, which were equally worthy of our "notice and our love." And it is farther observable, that even the very Sabbath, which God had commanded the Jews to set apart as a day of holy rest and cessation from their labors, did not hinder Him from exerting his Goodness on those who stood in need of it. For as he came "to work the" work of Him who sent Him," so he seemed impatient to run his race, and finish the work which God had given him to do.

Neither

Neither day nor night escaped without a gracious regard to this end. And though he often withdrew himself from his Disciples, and from public view, yet we find Him in these retirements, either praying to God, or privately dispensing the gracious effects of his Power to those who were proper objects to receive them. His Disciples never rejoin him after such a separation, without his having been employed or exercised himself in some fresh instance of Goodness. Nay, even when he was asleep upon the water, and they were in a tempest, (which was the only instance, that the Gospel affords us, of his having been inactive) he seems only to have subjected himself to this call of Nature, that his Divinity might exert itself with the greater lustre, and confirm the wavering faith of his Disciples: "For, when he awoke, he rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm;" the consequence of which was, that "they marvelled, and said one to another, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him?" In a word, the whole Gospel is full of "his Goodness, and

"and the wonders that he hath done for
"the children of men."

Now though we cannot imitate Him in all the several instances of Goodness which are recorded by the Evangelists, nor make our going about to do Good as effectual as his was, yet, as he hath left us so many examples which by his Grace we may be enabled to copy after, and to the due practice of which he hath annexed the greatest Promises and Rewards, so it will be the highest imprudence, as well as the most consummate misery, if we do not "go and do likewise." If we cannot restore a withered hand, and render it again serviceable to the owner, yet we may in some measure repair the loss of so useful a member by a generous contribution of what that part might of itself have supplied, had not this misfortune attended it. Though we cannot give immediate ease to the pains of a distempered body, yet we may act the part of the good Samaritan, we may pour in our oil and our wine, and see that proper care be taken for its relief. Though it is not in our power to appease the disorder and tumult of a wounded conscience,

science, by saying, "thy sins are forgiven thee;" yet we may by our comfort and advice, bring it back again from this darkness and shadow of Death, and be happy instruments of its being at last presented to its dear Redeemer, without spot and blameless. It would be endless, as well as unnecessary to enumerate every instance whereby this Duty is to be discharged: for there are as many ways of doing Good, as there are offices and operations in life. Not only the Rich, those whom the hand of Providence hath in a more eminent manner "blessed in their basket, and in their store;" and therefore have it in their power to extend their munificence to a far greater compass than others; but those in humbler and more obscure conditions, are not wholly deprived of the exercise of this Duty; nay, they are actually enjoined it according to their several abilities; and what they want in externals, must be made up by other moral qualifications. God is not so rigorous indeed, as to expect to receive, where he hath not bestowed; or so austere, as to demand the improvement of *five Talents*, where he hath only given *two*. "But if we have but little, we
" must

"must not scruple, but do our diligence
 gladly to give of that little." The most
 minute act of Goodness is not to be satisfied
 by our complaints and discontent; we are
 not to urge the abundance of others, in or-
 der to excuse ourselves. We must be mer-
 ciful after our power, and no plea of cir-
 cumstance, but absolute Want and Incapa-
 city, must restrain us from the performance
 of so positive a Duty. We are to consider,
 that we have all the same Rewards and Pro-
 mises vouchsafed us, and that we are fur-
 nished with an equal degree of power and
 ability to attain them. He whose lot hath
 not fallen in to fail a ground, as to be able
 to spare a little out of his labors, for the re-
 lief of those who are destitute of all means
 of subsistence, hath still reason to bless God
 that he is in a capacity to provide for his Fa-
 mily, that he is able to "go forth to his
 work, and to his labour, until the even-
 ing;" and that he can enjoy the fruits of
 it with cheerfulness and content, without
 repining at his own condition, or envying
 that of others. Such a man shines even in
 obscurity, and spreads a lustre all around
 him. His very food is a severe reprimand

to

to the Intemperate and Luxurious, who live not out half their days; his serenity and composure of mind, a seasonable rebuke to the troubles and vexations of the Wealthy; and his bodily constitution an unanswerable proof that he hath used his life without abusing it. Thus where we have it not in our power to perform actual Goodness, or works of Charity, we must make it up by exemplary Virtue. This no man, be his circumstances what they will, will be excused from, because it is at all times in his power.

But farther, this Duty of *going about* to do Good, supposes zeal, earnestness and delight in those who do it. The merit and value of all performances of this kind must depend upon the disposition of the mind from whence they flow. When works of Goodness are done with negligence or unconcern, as if it were perfectly indifferent to the doer, whether they succeed or miscarry, the efficacy of them is in a manner destroyed: It is the life and spirit, the zeal and fervor of religious enterprises that must recommend them to God. A lazy or counterfeit

perfect obedience to his laws, will not be regarded by the great Discerner of Spirits. If *Phineas* had addressed himself with this coolness and indifference, when he was intreating God that his vengeance might be stayed from the children of *Israel*, the Plague had not ceased, neither would his intercession have been characterized with that glorious record, "that it was imputed to him for Righteousness among all posterities for evermore." Even the very nature of Good supposes something great and worthy in the doer of it; and the sense of the blessed consequence of one such action will induce him to repeat it. Such a man can no more forbear shewing instances of this kind, than he can cease to think; the happy disposition which prompts him on to works of beneficence, he hath received from above; and the gracious influence it is under, prevents an abuse of it. His whole life is a perfect conformity to the Laws of God; the pious schemes which flow from his well-disposed heart for the relief of the distressed, are so many assurances of his sincere affection to man; and his unwearied diligence in putting them in execution, is a farther argument

-ment of his love of, and integrity towards his Maker. And therefore, when such a one supplicates God for the sins of particular persons, or intercedes with Him for a whole community; when he intreats, in the case of Famine, that he would turn the parched wilderness into a standing water, to slake the thirst of those who are ready to perish, or to avert any other temporal evil, it is well known with what efficacy the fervent prayers of such men have been generally attended:

And if we do not always succeed in our petitions to the Throne of Grace, it will be because either the nature of our Prayers are not such as are suited to our wants, or that the mind in which we offer them up, is not properly disposed to recommend them. And as this temper renders our Prayers and Devotions unacceptable to God, so our careless and indifferent exercise of Charity to men prevents the blessing which would be otherwise annexed to it. We must be always zealously affected in every good undertaking, or we can never expect the Reward, which the revealed Word of God hath promised to bestow upon it. Such waters must proceed

proceed from polluted fountains, either from a desire of popular applause, or some more immediate itch of vain-glory. And therefore, he who parts with all his Goods to feed the poor, upon such principles, whatever other good effects may attend the action itself, yet the doer of it forfeits his title to any approbation of, or reward from his Father which is in Heaven.

Indeed, one would imagine that no man who thus outwardly labors to promote the Glory of God, and the Good of his fellow-creatures, could have a heart so rotten as to be thus industrious only to be esteemed and reputed by men better than he is. And did not our own knowledge and experience convince us of sundry instances of this nature, it would be absurd even to suppose it. For we are assured by our blessed Saviour, that "every tree is to be known by its fruit;" and that "that tree which bringeth not forth good fruit, is to be hewn down, and cast into the fire." What extreme weakness and inadvertence therefore must every such person be guilty of, who has it in his power to go about and do Good, and yet mars the

essential purpose and design of it, for want of a well-meaning, a well-disposed heart? Who, like Cain, while he is offering up his sacrifice, his conscience is polluted with inward guilt, and premeditated wickedness. Or, like the Scribes and Pharisees in our Saviour's time, who sounded a trumpet when "they did their Alms, that they might be seen of men," without any due regard to the intrinsic merit of such an action, and entirely free from any motive of a future Retribution.

But if we ever desire to attain to the perfection of CHRIST's true Disciples, our Righteousness must exceed the Righteousness of those; and what we do of this kind, must be performed with such circumstances, as that our Father which seeth in secret, may not only approve of, but reward us in another life. And as the command of doing Good is universal, so no man can expect to be excused that portion of this necessary work which has fallen to his lot, either from his externals, or other moral accomplishments.

To the end therefore that we may render this

this Duty as effectual as may be, let us endeavor to conform to those Rules which St *Peter* hath recommended to our imitation ;
 " to be of one mind ; to have compassion
 " one of another ; to love as brethren ; to
 " be pitiful, and courteous ; not rendering
 " evil for evil, or railing for railing, but
 " contrariwise blessing ; knowing that we
 " are hereunto called, that we should inherit
 " a blessing." Then we shall exhibit the
 most irrefragable testimony, that we are not
 Christians only in appellation, but " that
 " CHRIST is in us of a truth ;" that we are
 sincerely affected with the love of our Bre-
 thren, and that we heartily wish their peace
 and prosperity ; that we labor earnestly to
 increase the number of those who shall be
 saved ; and that we ourselves are influenced
 by that laudable, and pure, and spiritual
 ambition, of " shining as the brightness of
 " the sun, and as the stars for ever and ever."



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SERMON XXII.

PSALM cxviii. 24.

This is the day which the LORD hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.

THE Psalm from whence these words are taken, is generally supposed to be written upon the return of the twelve Tribes to their legal obedience to their Sovereign. And it seems to have been alternately made use of both by King and People upon this account in their solemn Procession to the Tabernacle. The People, on their part, congratulate their King upon their return to their Duty; and the Royal Psalmist, on his part, shews how acceptable this event was to him in particular, by composing an Hymn to
return

return thanks to God for it, and setting apart a day devoutly to commemorate so extraordinary a blessing: "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it."

But if a sense of an unexpected deliverance from our enemies, or the quieting and reducing a factious and rebellious rabble to their Duty and Allegiance, could engage a nation or people in so pious an acknowledgment of the assistance of Heaven, as to set apart the annual return of a Day for religious Joy and Thanksgiving; how much must we Christians be indebted to the same supreme Being, for the full conviction this day affords us of a Redeemer? If they could praise God for a temporal deliverance, for a particular instance of his favor exhibited to them in a time of imminent danger; how great must be our gratitude for that universal Blessing which hath been vouchsafed to us, in the Resurrection of our Saviour? By which we are not only rescued from the tyranny of our spiritual foes, but we have the most evident assurance given us of our own Resurrection. We are not only fully convinced of that Life and Immortality

talities which are promised in the Gospel, but are likewise assured, if we tread in the paths of our Redeemer, that "this corruptible of ours shall one day put on Incorruption," and this mortal shall put on Immortality." How much more pertinently therefore are the words before us to be applied to the occasion of this day; and how much greater reason have we to say, "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it!"

So that in speaking to these words, I shall, in the *first* place, observe the great import of that memorable occurrence which relates to our Lord's Resurrection, and shew what reason we have to set it apart for a time of public Festivity, of religious Joy and Thanksgiving.

And then, *secondly*, I shall shew how and in what manner we are to express this Joy and Thanksgiving.

First, I am to observe to you the great import of that memorable occurrence, which we are now met to celebrate.

This indeed is a talk which requires a much abler pen to describe, and calls for

one of those primitive Christians, who were Followers and Disciples of the blessed Jesus, properly to illustrate. For in the due consideration of this particular, it is not so much the nature of the blessing which we reap from the Resurrection of CHRIST, as the manner wherewith such a Blessing should affect us, that is here to be considered. We are, it is true, though at such a distance of time, as capable of partaking of the glorious consequences which this wonderful occurrence produced, as the Apostles themselves were; but yet we cannot in reason be supposed to have the same degree of affection for our Redeemer that they had; who were so happy as to see, and converse with him here on earth; who were so far engaged in their belief of his being the Messiah, by hearing his Doctrines and seeing his Miracles, as to abandon the hopes and interests of this Life, and to risk all their future happiness upon this single point. And though they could not be brought to believe that part of his conversation which related to his Crucifixion, though they looked upon this as a trial only of their Fortitude, and how they would behave under such tidings; yet when

when this fatal event appeared, when they saw him, who, as they trusted should redeem "Israel," lifted up on the Cross, and shortly after bowing his Head, and giving up the Ghost; we may easily imagine how much it shocked and surprised them. Who therefore so proper to describe the dying agonies of our Redeemer, as those who were so conversant with him on earth, who partook with him in all the austerities of his life, and sympathised with him in his sufferings?

But if they were depressed with sorrow at what had happened to their Lord and Master just before, if the sight of so unlooked-for a spectacle had filled them with amazement and confusion; what a scene of Joy must display itself upon the news, that Jesus, the Captain of their Salvation, was alive again? That He, whom they saw expire on the cross a few days before, was risen from the Dead to prove his Messiahship, and to convince them of his Divinity. No one, I say, can be so well qualified to account for the uneasiness and anxiety which the former of these events occasioned; or
the

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the excessive joy which was produced by the latter, as those who had such a sense of them as the Disciples must be supposed to have had. We may in some measure indeed conceive how much must be affected where all their concerns and interests, both in this and a future life, are at stake. But none are so capable to describe the effects of the good or ill success of them, as those who have had the experience of both. If the Apostles therefore entertained any notions, before our Saviour's Crucifixion, which were not consistent with the suffering and afflicted part of CHRIST's character, they were now convinced of the contrary: if after his sufferings they could not be persuaded to look forward upon the Glories which would ensue, or build any dependence upon his rising again, all those doubts, which might arise from the supposed impossibility of the thing itself, and the diffidence they were under upon the account of his sufferings, were soon after removed. The sight of his Person, his converse, his eating and drinking with them after he was risen, gave them the fullest satisfaction, and served as an irrefragable

gible argument of his Divinity. It left so strong an impression upon their minds after our Saviour's Ascension into Heaven, that in all their disputes with their adversaries, in all their Pleas and Apologies with the Heathen powers, in all their public Orations, they seem to have recourse to this article as an undeniable instance of the truth of their Profession. And it was the full assurance of this that induced them gladly to execute the last commands of their Lord and Master; "Go ye into all the world, and" "preach the Gospel to every creature." They underwent a painful and laborious life, "they were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword, upon the certain persuasion of a Resurrection to a better state.

These were some of the good effects which CHRIST's rising again produced in his immediate successors, the Apostles. And in what manner it is capable of affecting us, and what obligations we are under for so perfect a discovery of what so nearly regards both our present and future happiness, may easily be evinced; if we consider only, that every

every thing else that our Saviour had done before, would have been ineffectual without it; and that the great Covenant of Grace and Mercy, which he came principally to establish, would not have taken place; that the ritual Law would not have been easily abolished; though the proper Sacrifice and Atonement had been made for it, nor we ourselves in any other condition, nor under any other direction, as to the performance of religious Duties, than that of degenerate and corrupt nature.

Without these first-fruits of our Salvation, and JESUS CHRIST'S shewing himself alive after his passion by many signs and wonders, the Apostles would not have ventured to have propagated the Christian Religion, much less to have lain down their lives, and suffered for it as they did. They might have gone so far as to venerate and esteem his memory, and to think that he was a person commissioned by divine Power; and there, in all probability, their belief would have rested. But when he fulfilled all the Predictions of the prophets, which related to the Messiah; when no man ever did as he

he did; or spake as he spake; when his whole life and doctrine was perfectly agreeable to his Mission; when he readily submitted to the portion of Affliction which was to befall him as Messiah, and performed that supernatural part of his rising again; there could be no room to doubt of his veracity.

That the Jews themselves, though they opposed him in the character of the Messiah, had nothing to object to him by way of Immorality, is evident from their own private reasoning; "How can a man, say they, who is a sinner do such Miracles? And farther, "Now we know," says the blind man, who had received his sight, appealing to their own thoughts, that such is the nature of the Divine Being, "God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth." And adds, moreover, "if this man were not of God, he could do nothing;" that is, he could work no such Miracles, as to open the eyes of one that was born blind; a work so extraordinary and supernatural in itself, that it never was before nor since thought to be in the least practicable

practicable by human art. "Since the world
" began was it not heard that any man ever
" opened the eyes of one that was born
" blind."

But though *this*, with a great many other
works of the like nature, were sufficient
evidence of a Divine Authority, yet such
was the incredulity of the Jews, so great was
their resentment of his mean appearance
under such a character, that they blasphem-
ously ascribed all his Miracles to the affi-
ance of the Prince of Darkness; and though
they fulfilled their Malice by causing him to
be put to death, all their industry and vigi-
lance could not prevent his rising again from
the Dead, and his re-assuming the same bo-
dy; which they thought they had sufficient-
ly secured, by the sealing the stone which was
rolled to the mouth of the sepulchre where it
was deposited, and placing a number of
Guards to prevent any attempts that might
be made to carry it off. They knew very well
that if they could but secure the body beyond
the time that our Saviour had prefixed for his
rising again, this would intirely falsify his
word, and help to blast the credit of his
former

former Miracles; But thanks to the officious diligence of the Jews, or rather the wise Providence of God, that by making the body sure, they have made sure the doctrine of the Resurrection also.

From hence we come to know the great importance of Christ's Resurrection, and that his Sufferings and Miracles, unattended with this, stand us in no stead; for, to make use of the Apostle's Metaphor, the corn that springs without being buried, and that which, though buried, springs not at all, do both equally disappoint the husbandman: imperfect were the Disciples hopes, and wavering their faith, while their Lord was as yet detained under the Power of the Grave; and the same darkness and confusion after his Death seized them, which, during the time of his Crucifixion, overspread the whole creation. But as soon as this glorious light, after so fatal an eclipse, appeared, the clouds of melancholy were dispersed, and the drooping spirits of the Apostles began to revive.

CHRIST has assured us by this signal victory,

tory, that Death itself is buried in his Sepulchre, and that our bodies, from earth's fertile womb, shall one day be moulded and fashioned into life. Well may the Apostle say, "It is CHRIST that died, yea rather, that is risen again;" his sufferings procure indeed, but his rising again institutes us in our salvation. And though by his passion he opened Hell, and by it led captive Sin and Death; yet his Resurrection opens Heaven, and discovers to us new means of Grace, and fresh hopes of Glory. There was the Conquest, but here the Triumph of our Victory. Upon the Rock of his Sepulchre our Faith seemed shipwrecked; but upon the stone rolled away it is now confirmed and established.

Thus every doubt and scruple in our religious confidence is removed, and every thing that it is requisite we should be informed of as necessary to our Salvation, made known to us in the clearest and most perspicuous manner; his Miracles attest his Mission, and his Resurrection proves his Divinity. How much reason therefore have we to adore the unparalleled condescension of the Messiah
in

in the work of our Redemption ; and to say with the Psalmist, " This is the Day " which the LORD hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it."

I am now, in the *second* place, To observe to you in what manner we are to express our Joy and Thanksgiving.

We have already, under the foregoing head, been informed of what import the Resurrection of CHRIST is to us. Let us now see what returns of Praise and Thanksgiving are due from us for it. The nature of the benefit conferred is purely spiritual, and the Joy which it must excite, as well as the Gratitude it demands, should be so too. The sense of every favor is best expressed by acknowledgments suitable to the favor itself, and agreeable to the intention of the donor. And though it may be urged that our blessed Saviour finished our ransom on the cross, and that if he had not appeared again on earth after his death, he would have completed his Mission with respect to us ; yet it is much to be questioned whether Christianity would have made that progress it hath

since done ; and whether his failure in the performance of that promise so often made to his Disciples, of his rising again within the limited time, would not, as has been already observed, have staggered their Faith, and prevented their propagating, as well as others from embracing the Christian Religion. The Death of our Saviour manifests his human Nature, but his Resurrection proves him to be God *with us*. For the first, we are to admire the exceeding condescension of the Son of God in assuming our nature ; and to condole and sympathize with him in his sufferings. The second bids us put off our sackcloth, and gird ourselves with gladness.

But let us not be so lost to Reason, however great and unspeakable the Blessings are which this day communicates to us, as to set no bounds to our rejoicing, or to be guilty of indecent or extravagant mirth. The greater the benefit we receive, the greater should be our care to keep the soul within its due limits, and to find out proper objects whereon to exercise the Joy and Gladness it is apt to conceive upon these occasions. The due end and institution of religious Festivals,

vals, is to employ our thoughts in the contemplation of those excellent persons that have gone before us, to point out proper examples to our imitation, and to imprint on our minds the beauty of Holiness. That of this Day, particularly, not only assures us of our purchased Redemption, but it calls upon us to arise to Virtue and a new Life. It affords us so lively an Idea of our victory over Death, that in a great measure dissipates the gloomy thoughts we are apt to conceive of our approaching Dissolution. And though (such is the necessity of our mortal nature) we are assured we must one day part with these earthly Bodies, these frail Tabernacles of the Soul, yet how should it rejoice us to think "we have in Heaven a " better, and a more enduring substance?" What a comfortable assurance must it be to a good man departing, to think, that, though he is now going to travel into the regions of the Dead, his Saviour and Redeemer liveth, that he will send his Angels to conduct him through the paths of the Grave: that a small time will bring him into the presence and acquaintance of just men made perfect;

and that he shall soon enter into the joy of his LORD.

How much reason, therefore, have we to offer up our Praises and Thanksgivings to the infinitely wise God for those clear testimonies that he hath given us of the truth of that Gospel which we believe ; and sincerely to beg of Him, that when it shall please Him to separate our Souls from our bodies, that they may be conveyed to that glorious Repository where the souls of the Apostles, Saints, Martyrs, Confessors, and all the faithful Followers of JESUS, wait for a happy Resurrection.



S E R M O N XXIII.

PSALM CXIX. 72.

The law of thy mouth is dearer unto me, than thousands of gold and silver.

THE many devout expressions we meet with in all the compositions of David, leave us no room to doubt of the great zeal and sincerity of their Author. This Psalm in particular is so full of his affection to the Law of God, that when he speaks of it, in comparison with the instruments of worldly bliss and satisfaction, it stands so high in his esteem, that with him they seem to have lost all their force and efficacy. And though he sometimes condescends, by way of comparison, to describe his great joy and complacency in

these pious amusements to others of an inferior nature, " that he is as glad of God's " word as one that findeth great spoils." yet he seems to do this, not so much to display his own superior and exalted sentiments of the divine Law, as to instruct and advertise the children of men, those who are conversant in other employments, and pursue Happiness in different scenes of life, that the Testimonies of God were capable of affording as great delight as all manner of Riches. Neither is this assurance of the Psalmist built upon bare speculation, but we have it warranted by his own experience. He was now in a condition to have gratified himself with every thing that the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and the Pride of Life, could have required. He was beyond the reach and control of all human power; he was surrounded with the riches and splendor of a potent kingdom, and had nothing to do, but to command and be obeyed.

But to leave his judgment in this case still the more impartial, he had already abused the blessings of Providence; reposed his confidence

confidence in the arm of flesh, and was so far wrought upon by his own private lust, as to be guilty of the horrid crimes of Adultery and Murder. So that if his passions and affections were capable of being engaged to persevere in a course of sensuality, such was his situation, that he was qualified to pursue it with all possible advantages. But we find he was not so deeply immersed in the pleasures of Sense, as to be utterly deaf to the checks and reproaches of Conscience. The Prophet *Nathan's* remonstrance of his wickedness under the Parable of a poor man's being deprived of a favourite and only ewe-lamb, through the avarice and violence of his rich neighbor, made so deep an impression on him, that he could not help pronouncing judgment upon the injurious person adequate to the greatness of his crime, and thereby condemning himself for his own iniquity.

In most of his compositions, but chiefly those that go under the name of his *penitential* Psalms, we meet with a great variety of expressions of the particular Grief and Repentment he was under upon this account.

And it is very remarkable, that nothing did or could conduce more to bring about this happy change, than the impartial bias of his understanding, and the private convictions of his conscience. It is for this reason he tells us, "whenever he called to remembrance his past life, he made haste" and prolonged not the time to keep God's "Commandments. That his acquaintance with them made him wiser than the aged, and that thereby he gained understanding, and hated all evil ways." Nay, in some particular passages there appear such exalted strains of devotion, that the Psalmist seems to be at a loss for words whereby to express his great love and affection to the divine Law. "LORD, says he, what love have I unto thy Law; all the day long is my study in it." So likewise in the Text, as in many other places, the farther he proceeds in the contemplation of the worth and excellence of the Oracles of God, the higher he rises in his affection towards them. "The law of thy mouth is dearer unto me, than thousands of gold and silver."

It will be worth our while therefore to inquire

inquire into the particular advantages which attend those who are thus conversant, and shew how far they exceed all other worldly Amusements.

And in doing this, it will be requisite to consider,

First, The Dignity and Authority of Him from whom this Law proceeds,

Secondly, The Subject-matter of it; and,

Thirdly, Its great End and Design.

Now each of these Propositions are so very essential to the due adjusting of this inquiry, and do withal furnish us with such a variety of arguments for the confirmation of what is asserted in the Text, that a due consideration of each cannot be expected, without transgressing the usual limits of a single discourse. I shall therefore confine myself to the proper examination of what may offer itself under the first Proposition.

Now this Proposition, in order to evince the truth of what is asserted in the Text, is the Dignity and Authority of Him from whom

whom this Law, which the Psalmist assures us was dearer unto him than gold or silver, proceeds.

This is so reasonable and natural a way of stating this Inquiry, that it cannot easily be objected to, and what by our own practice and experience in affairs of common life, we must allow to be the fairest and most impartial. Where counsel and advice is given in affairs of infinitely less consequence, the merit or disrepute of the Adviser render it more or less efficacious. Persons of unquestioned ability, that have stemmed the torrent of a corrupt age, and have convinced mankind of their love of Virtue, naturally claim an uncommon deference and approbation; whilst those of a contrary character sink into infamy and disesteem. I cannot indeed assert that this has been the uninterrupted result of virtuous principles, or that men have been always so disinterested as to pay this reasonable tribute to superior merit. No; there have been too many instances of a contrary disposition. The most eminent persons, in the most corrupt times, have fallen sacrifices to their Integrity;

tegrity: while others have succeeded in the world by Profaneness and Immorality.

But still, bad as the times have ever been, there have not been wanting those, who have transmitted the characters of these Martyrs to after-ages; and, blessed be God, they are not only shining ornaments in History, but we live to see their examples forced upon others, the imitation of their Virtues. If therefore there is such an attractive amiableness in a good character, if we naturally venerate and esteem the memory of those who have promoted the cause of Virtue; if we are led to confide in those whose Wisdom and Integrity we have often experienced; in a word, if there is a natural obligation upon us to be grateful, where Gratitude is due, to honor and respect those from whom we derive our Nature and Being, or to contribute our endeavors towards the due discharge of all the offices of a social life; it will necessarily follow, that we are under a superior obligation of manifesting all these tender regards, in the most extensive manner we are able, to Him who is the fountain and foundation of all our Happiness. For

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as we are His workmanship, and live and thrive upon his all-sufficiency, there cannot be any motive to render the conduct and behavior of a virtuous man amiable to us, which is not eminently and transcendently applicable to that of God. Besides, the favors and blessings we receive from men are of a temporary nature, and are often conferred through design or artifice, and their advice not always to be relied on; but the nature of God is such, that he cannot deceive; the same motive which prompted him to give us Life and Being, still engages his watchful Providence and Care over us. And as he had no design of his own to serve in creating us, so he can have no views, exclusive of our interest and preservation, in directing us how we are to discharge our respective Duties towards Him. This reflection will naturally furnish us with proper Ideas of the great Dignity and Authority of Him whose Law, the Psalmist tells us in the Text, "was dearer unto him than thousands of gold and silver."

Now the principal qualifications which constitute

constitute a good Lawgiver, may be reduced to these three.

First, That he be a person of sufficient Wisdom and Experience.

Secondly, That he have a natural Affection for those whom he governs. And,

Thirdly, That he be impowered to reward the obedient, and punish the guilty.

And *first* then, Let us conceive of Him as of a Being of sufficient Wisdom and Experience, and see what reverence and respect is due to Him upon that account.

How attractive a thing Wisdom is, we may observe in the instance of the Queen of *Sheba*, who came from the uttermost parts of the earth, to hear the Wisdom of *Solomon*. And it is very observable, when a man is famed for great accomplishments, whether moral or intellectual, how naturally such a one bespeaks the attention of his Auditors, and prepossesseth them in his favor. Thus we are informed the Rabbies among

among the Jews, and the Greek Philosophers, were listened to as Oracles ; and Persons of, the most eminent rank did not disdain to attend their Lectures. But alas ! what is the profoundest Wisdom of Men, compared with that of God ; the very essence of Reason, and the sole source and fountain from whence we derive our faint and imperfect glimmerings ? which, as he gives, so he can also when he pleases resume them again. He can infatuate the most subtle designers, and, as he himself speaks by the Prophet *Isaiab*, " make the Diviners " mad, turn the wise men back, and make " their wisdom foolishness." If then, I say, it is so natural for us to pay a suitable regard to persons of distinguished merit, and to extol human Wisdom, with all its imperfections ; what an impious folly must it be to despise or overlook the transcendent excellencies of " Him, in whom are hid all the " treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge ?" And yet, this every man is guilty of who neglects or disdains an acquaintance with the Word of God, in which are conveyed to us those sacred and unerring Directions which lead both to present and future Happiness.

Such

Such a neglect cannot admit of any other plea, than that, either God hath not such superiority of Wisdom; or, admit that he has such in himself, he hath not exerted it in his revealed Word. The former of which is direct Blasphemy, and the latter very little better. It would be very unphilosophical for any one to admit, that any thing, but what is perfectly and exactly wise, should proceed from infinite Wisdom.

The next necessary qualification of a good Lawgiver is, That he have a natural tenderness for those whom he governs.

Now there cannot be a more prevailing charm upon the Passions and Affections of mankind, than the condescending and affable behavior of a Superior. There is something so engaging in such a deportment, as nothing but extreme ill nature can resist. But if to this amiable and obliging temper we should add the many acts of Beneficence which flow from it, there cannot be the least room to doubt of the friendship and sincerity of the Donor.

Now

Now all this we are in a supereminent manner assured of in the Law of God. There we are informed, that the most exalted instances of human kindness fall infinitely short of the divine Love. That it surpasseth the most tender affection of the most tender Sex: "Can a Woman forget her Child, and not have compassion on the Son of her womb? yea, they may forget; yet will I never forget thee." And the Psalmist found it experimentally true. "When my Father and my Mother forsake me; the LORD taketh me up."

The tenderest bowels, compared to God's, are hard as adamant and flint. So that what *Solomon* says of him, in his Book of *Wisdom*, is very just and proper: "O LORD, thou lover of souls." And indeed it is impossible to reflect on the workmanship of our own Souls and Bodies, to survey the universe about us, or that better World above us, without being convinced that "the LORD hath done great things for us." And though the divine Nature was incapable of suffering for us, yet, that we might not want all imaginable evidences of his love,

He

He "who was God blessed for ever," assumed our flesh, under all its disadvantages, and sealed our Redemption by his blood. So that "greater love than this hath no man."

And therefore, if we consider the unparalleled love and affection of our Redeemer, the design of his becoming God incarnate, and submitting to an ignominious death: this will be such an argument for our conformity to his laws, as no reasonable man can possibly gainsay; and will bring us at length to set such a value upon the benefits conferred, that no worldly consideration will be able to prevail with us to neglect the performance of those conditions, upon which no less than an eternal Inheritance with the saints in light depends, and which the highest ties of interest and gratitude oblige us to fulfil.

Let us now proceed to consider the other necessary qualification of a good Lawgiver, namely, That he be impowered to reward the obedient, and punish the guilty.

Now this is so essential a requisite, that no law, though ever so wise and well-intended in its own nature, could subsist well without it. It would be to no purpose to prescribe Rules of Behavior in any respect, if the observance or breach of them were left intirely to peoples own choice and inclination. The bare shame of a transgression, without any other penalty attending it, would have but little weight with the offender; and the impunity of one violation, would of course encourage another. And therefore, to prevent the Disorders which would naturally arise among men, if every one was permitted to follow his own imaginations; we find in every civilized and well-governed society, for the better preservation and establishment of their respective laws, certain penalties annexed, adequate to the breach and violation of them. And it is observable, that we are not only obliged to submit to them as they are human institutions, but as they derive their power and authority from God. Indeed, the breach of the best constituted laws among men is not always attended with an adequate punishment; and it often happens, through the cunning and artifice of a delinquent,

quent, or the partiality of the magistrate, that the due execution of them is evaded. But then this is no fault in the laws themselves; but it is a severe reflection upon the person appointed to execute them, and he must severely account for it to God.

Thus likewise as to the Rewards any one's merit may intitle him to as a dutiful subject, or from any personal services to the state wherein he lives, though they have not always been applied agreeably to their original intentions; yet this is no argument against the reasonableness of such an appointment.

For if penal laws are necessary for the preservation of Peace and Order among men, if the Sword is delegated to the Magistrate for the punishment of Wickedness and Vice; ought he not to be intrusted with the power of dispensing favors to the obedient and deserving, for the encouragement of Virtue, and for the Praise of them that do well? If he errs in his choice, and abuses this power, the abuse will recur upon himself. Instead of proving himself a Minister of God for good, to the people over whom he presides,

instead of leaving a grateful memorial of his past administration behind him, instead of being esteemed and respected by the age in which he lived, he will make himself the object of public censure and reproach, will follow the generation of his fathers unpitied, and stink in the nostrils of posterity.

Thus it happens in this lower world, and will ever do, so long as men are influenced by their passions; but it cannot be the same in the Kingdom of CHRIST and of GOD. As his nature is not capable of additional Happiness, so he cannot have any view of his own to serve, exclusive of our interest and preservation. And therefore, when he gave us Laws for the Government of our lives, he not only took care to adapt them to our capacities, but encouraged the observance of them with eternal Rewards; and affixed everlasting Punishment to the breach or failure of them. And indeed, unless he had done this, it is highly probable, that the Rules and Precepts of the Christian Religion, (notwithstanding their own excellency, and the great dignity and authority of their Author) would have had but little influence

influence upon the lives and practices of men; at least, they would not have made that progress they have since done; and been received with that Awe and Authority upon the Conscience which they have been. Accordingly, we find our blessed Saviour, in many of his Discourses with his Disciples, in order to their persevering under hardships and difficulties in this life, taking opportunities of introducing that most glorious promise of an immortal Happiness, which would infinitely over-balance all that they could suffer upon his account. And it is not to be questioned, but that the present flourishing condition of the Gospel amongst us, as well as that of other countries, is principally owing to the encouragement its Professors have received from this assurance. No man would have submitted to that severe command of taking up the Cross, of observing stated times of Mortification and Self-denial, and of conforming to other Duties which the Christian Religion enjoins, if there had not been a Reward annexed to the performance of those Duties. And therefore, as our Saviour well knew what an awe and influence this would have upon the Lives

and Practices of men, so he took care to enforce the observance of them with the highest Promises, and to deter men from the breach and omission of them with the severest Threatenings. It will be to no purpose to spend any more of our time to prove the necessity of these Institutions; it being impossible that any Government should subsist long without them.

And therefore I shall conclude, by observing of what Importance to us all our knowledge of, and acquaintance with the Law of God, is, since it is communicative of the greatest and most valuable Blessing of this Life, and an unquestionable security of an immortal Happiness in another world.

We should do well to take all opportunities of hearing it explained, of reading it for our private instruction, and of meditating on it day and night; we should take care that no worldly pleasures or amusements intice or draw us from our Duty; we should reflect upon the shortness and uncertainty of the one, and the infinite satisfaction of the other. We should consider that what we

are thus intent upon, are the dictates of unerring Wisdom, the kind admonitions of an indulgent Father and Creator; the sacred Interpreters of every thing that is fit to be done by us, and the certain Messengers of future vengeance to those who disobey them.

These considerations, as they will serve to confirm us in holiness, so they will of course bring us to have the same high esteem and affection for the Law of God with the holy Psalmist; and we shall then be able to say with him, "The Law of thy Mouth is
" dearer unto me, than thousands of gold
" and silver."



And thus intent upon, are the dictates of un-
erring Wisdom, the kind admonitions of in-
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These considerations, as they will serve to confirm the in-balance to they will be comforting us to have the same high esteem will affect to the Law of God with the

SERMON XXIV.

LUKE xiv. 7, 8, 9, 10.

And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms ; saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room : lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him ; and he that bade thee and him, come and say to thee, Give this man place ; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room ; that when he that bade

bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee.

IF we carefully look into the passages of our blessed Redeemer's life, we may be easily informed how very offensive every instance of Pride was to him, by the frequent occasions he takes to expose it, and at the same time, of recommending the imitation of its opposite Virtue. And if we consider only with how destructive an influence the former is attended, with regard to the great end of Religion and our final Happiness; and how highly conducive the latter is towards procuring our present and future felicity; it will appear highly necessary that He, who came to expiate the sins of mankind, and to give them proper instructions how to worship and serve their Creator, should have been very particular in declaring against any practice or behavior, that was repugnant

repugnant either to the genius of his Doctrine, or tended to subvert the gracious design of his sufferings. And therefore, as he came to seek that which was lost, so we find a great part of his ministerial Life and Conversation was spent amongst Publicans and Sinners. And though this drew a particular odium upon Him from the Scribes and Pharisees, yet it afforded him many opportunities of not only clearing himself from their aspersions with regard to his Doctrine and Miracles; but likewise of exposing their Pride and Hypocrisy, though concealed under the specious disguises of Virtue and Religion. And though they were persons of the highest estimation among the Jews, by virtue of their seemingly exemplary and religious lives, yet we find in the judgment of Him who could not be deceived, that their crimes were beyond the common size; and that those whom they branded with the title of Hypocrites, and excluded from their commerce and society, had a better title to the favor of Heaven than themselves; because what errors *they* were guilty of, with regard to their Duty to their Maker, might be owing to a want of better information,

but

but this was an excuse which the others, who had the *form* and knowledge of the Law, could by no means pretend to. Nay, they were so far from being satisfied with the performance of those Duties which the Law of *Moses* enjoined, that they even superadded to them, and did not scruple to "teach for" doctrines the Commandments of men." And it was upon this account our blessed Saviour so often, and so severely remarks upon them, and exposes their great Folly, Pride, and Hypocrisy.

The short history of the behavior of the Pharisee in the House of God, described to us in these words, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are," and so on, may be sufficient to shew to what an excess of arrogance a conceited opinion of our own excellencies is apt to hurry us; and how naturally upon this follows the contempt of the rest of mankind. To prevent, therefore, the imitation of so criminal a behavior, our blessed Saviour takes every opportunity that offered of exposing the Sin and Folly of those who did all their works to be seen of men; nay, even preferred the praise of men

to that of God. And he often gives directions to his Disciples "not to be as the Scribes and "Pharisees, who loved the uppermost rooms "at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogue, and greetings in the markets, and "to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi." And it was upon this account he introduced the Parable in the Text. And though the direction there given for our behavior upon the like occasion, may not seem to be attended with any great import, as it was a ceremonial only; yet as it was grounded upon an observation that many of them that were bidden, were forward and solicitous in the choice of the uppermost rooms, without considering superior merit or distinction, or the settled forms or rules of Precedence; the advice he gives upon it is not only agreeable to the rules of Decency and good Manners, but it tended very strongly to recommend that meek and humble spirit which was to qualify men to be heirs of his Kingdom; and so to farther and promote one of the greatest designs of his Mission. And therefore any sort of Prescription with regard to our behavior, that tends to our present or future Happiness, should so far deserve

serve our esteem, as to induce us to apply it according to its intention. But this of an humble deportment in the intercourse of life, was a recommendation of so weighty and important a nature, that a man must really be his own enemy, as well as troublesome to others, who offended against it. For admit no subsequent Happiness was to attend it as a duty of Religion, still the possessor of it would carry his own Reward with him, in that peace and composure of mind, which the exercise of this Virtue would infallibly procure him. But since we are assured by the Author of all Righteousness, that there will be an after-reckoning for all our deeds done in the flesh, that "the wicked shall go away into everlasting Punishment, but the righteous into Life eternal;" it would argue extreme want of sense not to do our utmost endeavors to obtain a blessed Resurrection. It would be a high aggravation of our neglect, since what is recommended to us in order to make us partakers of the Inheritance of the saints in light, is in every respect not only agreeable to our nature, suited to our condition

as

as creatures, and attended with so great a recompence of Reward.

Sure, after so many encouragements to the practice of Humility, one would think there could be no room to harbor a contrary temper.

But such is the perverseness of human Nature, that sometimes, rather than shew itself conformable to the best advice, it will dispute the most obvious Truths, and reject the clearest information. This is frequently the offspring of a positive disposition. But when it is joined to a conceit of a man's own superior understanding, it is of pernicious consequence. For then, all the benefits which arise from mutual Commerce and Society become forfeited, and nothing that has a salutary influence can come near him. "Seest thou, says *Solomon*, a man that is "wise in his own conceit? there is more "hope of a fool than of him." Deplo-
rable state of pride and haughtiness! that a Fool, who is incapable of instruction, should be preferable to thee with all thy conceited Wisdom and Understanding.

What

What could have been said more to discourage us from so unnatural a temper? What better argument to incite us to a contrary disposition? For if one that is wise in his own conceit, by leaning too much on his own judgment, doth of course betray great weakness and presumption, which must naturally create the abhorrence and disrespect of his fellow-creatures; so a man who submits his reason to another for the sake of Truth, or any other salutary end, must convince mankind that he is biased by an honest and ingenuous regard to Virtue, as well as a due sense of his own infirmities.

This is the man that considers himself as he ought, as a creature liable to errors, and subject to temptations; as one not born to distress or over-awe mankind in a high station, or to be troublesome or uneasy in a low one. And if this was well considered, Haughtiness, Pride, and Ill-nature would receive a great check; and many offences arising from the non-observance of trifling matters would be overlooked. For a good Christian will always retain a greater regard to the commands of his Saviour, than to the common

common forms and customs of the world. And it will be a matter quite indifferent to him, if he does not meet with that respect from men which his superior merit may intitle him to. He has *that* within him which infinitely over-balances all the Honors and Acquisitions of this life, a quiet and peaceable Conscience; *that* which points out to him a proper behavior to his God, and directs him in the due discharge of that Duty which he owes to his Neighbor. And as this is his inseparable companion, the guide and influence of all his actions; so it is the unhappiness of a haughty spirit to be quite differently directed. For such is the malevolent effect of Pride, that it will admit of no advice; and though the wise Creator of the universe should declare his abhorrence and detestation of its conduct, yet such is its daring Impiety, that it "careth not for God," "neither is God in all its thoughts."

More, I think, need not be urged with regard to the fatal error of this Vice, if men would but suffer themselves to think or act agreeably to the dictates of Reason, or the precepts of Religion. The first of these will most evidently point out the Folly, the latter the execrable Sin of it. But since it

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is a crime of that epidemical nature, as to have made its way into all lands, and strewed itself without any distinction in all places, I should be very much wanting in my Duty if I did not remonstrate upon the continuance of it.

Bad enough indeed it is when made use of in private life, but of most wretched and pernicious consequence when it attends us in the House of God, where we assemble to confess our sins, to deprecate God's Judgments, and to implore the continuance of his Mercies. What an amazing influence therefore must it be to join in a religious assembly, in external Prayer and Thanksgiving, when we cannot but be conscious to ourselves that our "inward parts are very wickedness?" We are not now to learn, that "the Prayer of the Hypocrite will be turned into sin;" or that the best and most acceptable "sacrifice to God is a meek and contrite spirit." Common Charity would forbid me, if I could, to point out the persons guilty of this Hypocrisy, though the marks and characters of it were too visible not to be discerned. The wife Son of Man has given us a sufficient cri-

tion whereby to distinguish persons of this unhappy cast of minds. And future experience has confirmed his observation. But lest I should be thought to advance my argument without mentioning my Authority, it may be proper just to recite the particulars of my Author. "A man's gait, excessive laughter, and gaudy attire, shew what he is." But still I cannot help remarking, however demonstrative this external behavior is of a man's inward sentiments in affairs of common life, it is charitably to be presumed that it is not a true index of his mind when he is addressing the supreme Majesty of Heaven. There is such an awe and respect due from the creature to the Creator, that a man must be abandoned of common sense, and must do the most violent outrage to his Reason, to be guilty of it. Such a one would not only forfeit the character of a good subject, and of a kind neighbor, but, what is above every other consideration, his title to the Throne of Grace. His Life must be one continued display of the Tyrant and the Hypocrite, and his final departure must terminate in the utmost disgrace and misery.

How much the reverse is the deportment
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of the humble and sincere Christian, who looks upon himself as an indigent creature, ever thankful for the blessings of Providence, and possessing his soul in patience. Sure, after so disagreeable a picture of the one, and so amiable a description of the other, we cannot hesitate a moment which of the two ought to engage our strictest attention to copy after.

But lest what has been already urged to excite us to the attainment of a meek and humble spirit should be insufficient, I shall endeavor to enforce the practice of Humility, from some peculiar advantages that inseparably attend it.

The first (and which is none of the least) is, that it reflects a certain Glory around the Possessor of it, and gives him a peculiar ornament in every condition of life wherein he is placed. So that a man of this temper claims, as it were, a certain respect, which the proud and ambitious are strangers to; for men generally esteem those most who do not over-value themselves; and Honour, like Punishment, frequently follows those who fly from it.

Another advantage peculiar to the humble man is, that his soul is always free and undisturbed,

undisturbed, he is never ruffled with those passions, which the proud man's assiduity will not be able to screen him from. Envy ever gives way to Contentment; and instead of those boisterous and turbulent passions, Anger and Revenge, his breast constantly glows with the generous principles of Love and Friendship; with the warm desires of "Peace on earth, and Good-will towards men."

But that which should most of all engage us to the practice of this Virtue, is, that a man is made thereby in some measure partaker of the Divine Nature. And as we may form that noble wish to be "like our Father which is in Heaven, and to be perfect as he is perfect:" So by Humility we make the nearest approach to, and bear the clearest resemblance of that God, who disdains not to visit his creature man; "Who, though he be high, yet hath he respect to the lowly; as for the proud, he beholdeth them afar off."

Another peculiar advantage of Humility, is, that as it teaches us to think meanly of ourselves, so it inspires us with reverend and exalted thoughts of the Almighty; and puts

us in mind, that whatever may be enjoyed or expected by us, must flow from the Liberality of that glorious Being, the author of all good. So that Humility is the very source and fountain of all that obedience which we owe to our Maker; and it will be impossible that we should ever be brought to look upon God or Religion as we ought, till we become mean and lowly in our own eyes.

And here I cannot help observing, that to the want of this particular Grace we may justly attribute all the Wickedness that has spread itself over the face of the whole earth. For had not our first Parents hearkened to the Father of Pride, had they been contented to remain as they were created, "a little lower than the Angels," and had not aspired to the infinite perfections of God himself, our passions had then been under our command, and without the exceeding depravity and corruption which at present attends them; and Sin and Death, with all their fatal accomplices, had been "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for ever."

Let us, therefore, look up to the Author and Finisher of our Faith, JESUS CHRIST; let

let us trace his steps from *Bethlehem* to *Mount Calvary*, and "learn of him to be meek and
"lowly of heart."

And though this is a talk for all sorts and degrees of sin, yet it should take a deeper root, and be more strongly imprinted in their hearts especially who are blessed with ease and affluence. Those persons ought to have a particular regard, lest the foot of Pride come against them: for the greatness of their Condition exposes them to more violent temptations; their Pomp and Splendor of life dazzle their eyes; and, upon a survey, their Glory and Honor break so strongly upon their sight, that their Imperfections are hid, and the frailty of their nature is overlooked.

In order, therefore, to correct and suppress this rising of the soul, which is generally the child of Prosperity, I would recommend the exercise of those two important Precepts, *Justice* and *Mercy*; that by doing fairly and honestly to all, the greatest of men may remember that they stand indebted to those of a more inferior rank and quality.

And as nothing can give us a greater insight into our own Infirmities, than seeing
those

those of our neighbors, so nothing can preserve a fixed and steady Humility in our souls, so much as being frequently conversant in acts of Charity and Mercy. When we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, release men out of prison, and the like, do not our thoughts recoil back, and are not our souls filled with a more than usual horror? Does not the misery of our fellow-creatures convince us that we should be unable to bear the load of their pressures and afflictions? How inexpressible therefore must be the Happiness of that man, both here and hereafter, that hath made this use of his Prosperity? To him shall his great Lord and Master say, when he standeth in the latter day upon the earth, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord," for thou hast performed all that I commanded thee; thou hast done justly, loved mercy, and walked humbly with thy God:" which blessed sentence, that we may all in that day receive, God of his infinite mercy grant, &c.

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